# GANDHI
## HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

*Builders of Modern India*

# GANDHI
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J.B. KRIPALANI

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## ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different people. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Sri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.

# PREFACE

ABOUT three years ago, Sri U.S. Mohan Rao, the then Director, Publications Division, invited me to write a short biography of Gandhiji. I presumed that he wanted from me a booklet of some sixty pages or so. Many years ago I had prepared for All India Radio a short sketch of Gandhiji's life which the authorities wanted to translate for being broadcast in Persian. Hoping to brush it up and give it to the Publications Division, I thought no more of it. On the Division reminding me of my promise some six months later, I discovered that something more ambitious was expected of me. I had very little leisure then. I had to fight two elections to the Lok Sabha in about three months' time. It is my fate that I succeed only in by-elections. After the election I set to work on the task I had undertaken. But I found it stupendous, considering the handicaps from which I suffered.

A life of Gandhiji which would do some justice to his unique personality, his ideas and his novel technique of fight to redress political wrongs and injustice, national and international, required the pen of a great and powerful writer. All my writings so far had been of a polemical character, occasioned by political controversies. These increased as the struggle for the freedom of the motherland became more serious and urgent under Gandhiji's leadership of the Congress and the people. Having joined Gandhiji during his satyagraha in Champaran (Bihar) in 1917 and having made a painful effort to understand his philosophy of life and his new technique, I often tried to defend his ideas, so far as I could, against attacks from the advocates of constitutional agitation, when India had no democratic constitution by which the Government could be changed. I had also to defend his ideas against the so-called "scientific" socialists, who held that freedom and socialism could be achieved in India simultaneously ! I had also to explain to the sceptics the value of the constructive programme and the scientific nature of Gandhiji's new scheme of Basic Education. But a full-length biography

of Gandhiji was beyond my capacity. The available matter was so voluminous, varied and valuable that it was difficult to pick and choose. I have, however, in this book, tried to do my best. I am conscious that many events of significance must have been left untouched. To add to my difficulties, I was told that the volume would be issued in connection with Gandhiji's centenary celebrations and must, therefore, be ready by the beginning of October 1969.

It is true that I was almost the first, if not the very first, person, interested in the political life of the country and its freedom, to meet Gandhiji when in the beginning of 1915 he finally came to India. It was natural to expect that in the course of over thirty years' association with him I must have collected a good deal of material which I would record and which would be of interest to the reader. But my contact with Gandhiji was not as intimate as was generally believed. Even though after Champaran, I lived for five years in close proximity to him at the Sabarmati Ashram, when I was the Acharya (Principal) of his premier educational institution, the Gujarat Vidyapith, I did not meet him often. When I met him, I did so only to enquire after his health. He was a busy man, and I too had little leisure from the task of putting into shape the scheme of national education.

I often accompanied him during his tours and organised some of them. Yet my contact with him was more political than personal. I had never cultivated the habit of referring my private difficulties to him. I had learnt that as he solved his problems by himself, so must I. I never had any private talks with him as other leaders had, notably Jawaharlal. I did not encourage Gandhiji's habit of playing the father confessor to the inmates of his Ashram and to those who came in intimate contact with him. I had an idea that some of them confessed their real or imaginary sins in order to win his confidence. As a matter of fact, I had rarely a personal problem. I never indulged in long correspondence with him. Whenever I had something to ask, I wrote to his Secretary, Mahadevbhai, who was a dear friend. I have no copies of the few letters that I must have exchanged with Gandhiji. Having once been mixed up with revolutionaries, I had made it a habit to destroy all correspondence, as soon as

I had done with it. For the same reason I did not maintain a diary. Hence I could not give an intimate personal picture of Gandhiji.

The present attempt to write a biography of Gandhiji must be considered a joint product of many hands. The chief among them is Sucheta, who helped me in collecting and putting together the material. I had invaluable help from Pyarelal and Prof. K. Swaminathan who read through the final draft. The services of Sri K.N. Vaswani and Sri K.P. Goswami of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi were made available to me by the former Director, Sri Shankar Dayal. In preparing the final draft, I was also helped by Sri C.L. Bhardwaj, Director of the Publications Division, and Sri R.M. Bhatt of the same department. The last complicated portion of the narrative was finalised with the help of my nephew, Girdhari. These friends worked overtime to help me with collection and arrangement of the material. My thanks are due to them all. But the opinions expressed in the book are my own. I alone must be held responsible for them.

I have divided the book into two parts, one narrating the events of Gandhiji's life, the other dealing with his thought. I have tried as much as possible to keep my person out of the narration. Where I have talked of myself, I have done so for historical reasons. Also in that light must be taken my criticism of my dear friends, who played an important role at great sacrifice and with much ability in the glorious freedom fight of our country. It must be understood that my criticism does not take away anything from my great admiration and even respect for them.

I believe that Gandhiji today is regarded by many the world over as one of the Great Teachers, whose thought is for the whole of humanity and for all time to come, so far as one can see. Though he believed that "truth and non-violence are as old as the hills", yet even so a world teacher, when he keeps old values before humanity, gives them a new significance and a new depth of meaning. Christ said that he had come to "fulfil the law and not to destroy it". But the law can be truly fulfilled only when its scope is deepened and widened to meet new situations. I believe that is the real contribution of Gandhiji. He has re-stated truth and non-violence to cover new ground, for

which there are only slight hints in the old dispensations of the world.

May I request the reader to be a little indulgent to the present writer ? My power to interpret correctly Gandhiji's thought is strictly limited. I might have made great blunders. But I can assure him that I have written as I have felt. I have also described events as they occurred according to my knowledge. I have tried to be as objective as possible. I have not consciously twisted facts to suit any purpose. It is possible that my comments have been unconsciously coloured by my personal opinions and even prejudices about men and events. However, that cannot altogether be avoided by an author who sets out to write of and comment upon political events in which individuals, parties and nations are involved. It is the risk every commentator has to run. If, in this respect, I have sinned, I am in good company.

Only great *yogis* and masters who can see events directly, without the medium of language, can understand a great thought correctly. For others, who understand ideas through the medium of words, there will always be a gap between word and reality. That gap is filled by the masters by prescribing certain disciplines, which would lend life and substance to words. A well-known Sindhi poet has truly said, "Those, caught in the maze of words; can never attain the lofty heights of love." If, therefore, Gandhiji is to be properly understood, some work by way of *sadhana* as suggested by him becomes essential.

*New Delhi, October* 1969

J. B. Kripalani

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# PART I

# His Life

# 1

# Early Life

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI was born at Porbandar (Gujarat) on October 2, 1869. He belonged to a respectable middle-class Bania family whose members had long ago abandoned their traditional caste occupation of trade and taken to administrative service. His grandfather, father and uncle were Prime Ministers in some of the petty Indian states with which the peninsula of Kathiawad was studded before independence. About this in his *Autobiography* Gandhiji says: "... for three generations, from my grandfather, they have been Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad States." About his father Karamchand, Gandhiji writes that he was "a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered.... He was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict impartiality...." He had little book-learning. "But his rich experience of practical affairs stood him in good stead in the solution of the most intricate questions and in managing hundreds of men." He was courageous and he stood up boldly for what he considered right. "He had no ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property," says Gandhiji.

Gandhiji's mother Putlibai was the traditional Hindu wife and mother absorbed in the family. Deeply religious, she regularly said her prayers, visited the temple and fasted on the innumerable Hindu fast-days, making light of the hardship that such a regulated and austere life involved. This was the customary life of the upper caste women in those days, as it is even today in many orthodox

families. Like her husband, Putlibai had robust common sense. "She was well informed about all matters of State and the ladies of the court thought highly of her intelligence." This, in brief, is the family background of the future Mahatma.

As is usual in middle-class families, young Gandhi was sent to school. About his school days he says: "To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed—that was my daily habit. I literally ran back, because I could not bear to talk to anybody. I was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me." As for others poking fun at him, Gandhiji evidently greatly changed in after life. It was not unoften that his ways made people indulge in fun at his expense. But he was supremely indifferent if he thought that what he did was correct. He could even stand alone as he had often to do. He describes himself as a "dud" in his school days, and could not put his heart in the mechanical teaching which was, and is still to a great extent, prevalent in India. Boys of tender age are segregated, often in overcrowded and sometimes ill-ventilated class-rooms, for many hours each day, to memorise lessons which they scarcely understand, with fear of the rod always hanging over their heads. The system is heartless and monotonous. Even an intelligent learner, under such a bleak system, may not show much enthusiasm for his lessons. When we make these allowances, young Mohandas could not have been such an unintelligent pupil as he makes himself out to be. With a habit of deprecating his good qualities which was usual with him throughout life, he writes that he had no high regard for his ability. Naturally, therefore, he was surprised when he was awarded prizes and scholarships. But one can clearly see that he was a fairly intelligent pupil. He was hard-working and conscientious in his studies. He very jealously guarded his character and was very sensitive to rebuke or punishment. He writes, "I did not so much mind the punishment as the fact that it was considered my desert." He, therefore, went prepared with his daily task, as he disliked to deceive or to be taken to task.

Is there anything in his school days which marks him out as the future great man in the making? Evidently nothing in particular except his conscientiousness born of a shy and sensitive nature and his scrupulous regard for truth. Of the latter we have some

significant examples. When, during a school inspection, his teacher hinted to him to copy from his neighbour the correct spelling of an English word he failed to take the hint. About this his teacher rebuked him. But he says in his *Autobiography* : "I never could learn the art of 'copying'." This, however, as he tells us, made no difference in his respect for the teacher. In his high school days this sensitive boy belonging to an orthodox Vaishnavite family took to meat-eating on the sly. This he did, having been convinced by one of his companions that the superiority of the Englishman over the Indian lay in the fact that the former took a meat diet. If, therefore, the foreign yoke was to be thrown off, Indians also must take to meat-eating. This was the view current at that time among many educated Indians who felt the humiliation of foreign rule. Gandhiji, however, soon gave up meat-eating not because he was convinced that there was any flaw in the argument of his friend but because it involved concealment and deception before his parents and elders who would have been painfully shocked if they had known the truth.

As was the custom in those days, he was married at the early age of thirteen. About his married life at the time he writes: "It is my painful duty to have to record here my marriage at the age of thirteen. As I see the youngsters of the same age about me who are under my care, and think of my own marriage, I am inclined to pity myself and to congratulate them on having escaped my lot. I can see no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage." He also records that he was a lustful and jealous husband. That a youth of that tender age should show these traits is nothing to be wondered at. However, his sensitiveness makes him exaggerate the import of his sinful behaviour. This overpowering idea of sin may be said to have marked him throughout life. It made him put all sorts of restrictions upon himself. To carry these out meticulously, he resorted to vows to strengthen his will. His early marriage does not seem to have interfered with his studies, and he writes : "I was passionately fond of her.... Separation was unbearable.... If with this devouring passion there had not been in me a burning attachment to duty, I should either have fallen a prey to disease and premature death, or have sunk into a burdensome existence. But the appointed tasks had to be

gone through every morning, and lying to anyone was out of the question. It was this last thing that saved me from many a pitfall." This over-mastering sense of devotion to duty marked Gandhiji's conduct throughout his life.

Gandhiji does not seem to have been religious-minded. He complains that his teachers could have helped him in understanding religion but they did not do so. Like every Hindu, he had learnt that the final goal of life was self-realisation, but then he did not understand the full implication of this. He says that the routine household worship left him cold. But whenever he read or heard the scriptural stories of loyal and truthful conduct, they made a deep impact on him. He learnt the efficacy of uttering the name of God (Ramanama) from an old maidservant. He was devoted to his parents and nursed his father through a long illness.

Further, he says: "One thing took deep root in me—the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening.

"I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experiences during the South African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible." Gandhiji affirms that they date to the time when his mother told him not to touch the scavenger who came to clean their latrine.

When his high school studies were over and he passed the matriculation examination, the question of his future studies and career was debated in the family. But before that he had already joined college at Bhavnagar. His experience about his studies was not quite happy. He says : "I found myself entirely at sea. Everything was difficult. I could not follow, let alone take interest in, the professors' lectures. It was no fault of theirs. The professors in that college were regarded as first-rate. But I was so raw. At the end of the first term, I returned home." All this is difficult to understand, considering that young Mohandas's school career was

successful as he was a hard-working and conscientious student and had received prizes and scholarships. His father having passed away, he was under the guardianship of his mother and elder brother. The latter saw in the successful school career of his younger brother the possibility of his one day occupying some position of responsibility in Government or State service, thus improving the financial position of the large joint family which had evidently deteriorated after his father's death. At this stage, a family friend advised that he be sent to England to prepare for the bar. This would brighten the prospects for State service as also, if need be, prepare him for an independent career. There were, in those days, many difficulties in the way of high caste people crossing the seas and going to foreign lands. Hindu orthodoxy could not be maintained there. Then there were other objections. Young men going to England learnt outlandish habits in food, drink, dress and general manners and morals. They took to a meat diet. Drink and sex were other temptations to which the inexperienced Indian youth in England was exposed. However, Gandhiji was keen upon going. It shows that in spite of his shyness he had high ambitions. His father, though occupying a high position, had left little money. Yet his brother was willing to invest borrowed capital on his foreign education. The final decision lay with the mother. She would allow the son to go abroad only on condition that he took three vows. He must promise that while in England, he would not touch wine, woman and meat. Young Gandhi was prepared to take the vows. The vows having been solemnly administered and taken, he was allowed by his mother to proceed to England to qualify for the bar. A part of the necessary funds was raised by selling his wife's ornaments. Gandhiji left India in his 18th year.

In England, this shy, retiring young man found himself at sea. He often yearned for home and the tender affection of his mother. The vow never to touch meat left him half-starved and caused his friends much embarrassment, owing to a false sense of social decorum, born of inferiority complex from which most of the Indians suffered in those days. But Gandhiji would not yield to the importunities of his well-meaning friends. For him "a vow was a vow and could not be broken". After a long search he discovered a vegetarian restaurant where he had not only his fill for the first time but also

came across literature on vegetarianism. This further strengthened his resolve. He was no more a vegetarian because of the vow but because of free choice. About this he says: "I had all along abstained from meat in the interest of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now made in favour of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforward became my mission." The literature on vegetarianism that he made it a point to read initiated him in the science of dietetics, and experiments therein occupied an important place in his life. Also, it brought him in contact with some notable persons of the time. With a youthful zeal he became the secretary of a vegetarian club. But, as he says, he always felt tongue-tied. Not that he did not feel tempted to speak, but he was at a loss to know how to express himself. He says that his incapacity to express himself freely lasted throughout his stay in England. He adds : "...my constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever. In fact I can see that, on the contrary, it has been all to my advantage. My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words." This should be a lesson to politicians who are never tired of speaking even when they have nothing worthwhile to say.

Disappointing his friends in the matter of food, he tried to satisfy them by making of himself an English gentleman. He took lessons in dancing and playing on the violin, but had little success and soon gave up the effort. He succeeded better with his dress. The fastidiousness in dress persisted throughout his life, even when he was wearing a loin cloth and a *chaddar*. Though fastidious in dress, he lived a simple life. He had limited funds and these he used with the utmost economy, keeping account of every penny he spent. He writes : "This habit of economy and strict accounting has stayed with me ever since, and I know that as a result, though I have had to handle public funds amounting to lakhs, I have succeeded in exercising strict economy in their disbursement, and instead of outstanding debts have had invariably a balance in respect of all movements I had led." One would wish that all those who are in

charge of public funds kept in mind the restrictions that he imposed upon himself in their disbursement. This plain and economic living did not make his life dreary. On the contrary, his simple living, he says, "harmonised my inward and outward life; my life was certainly more truthful and my soul knew no bounds of joy". This shows that Gandhiji, in adopting the simple way of life, was not doing any violence to his inherent nature, *swabhava*; rather because he worked in consonance with it, his life was not only easy but also joyous. I am afraid this is not the case with many of his followers who, when they try to imitate his simple way of life, are merely doing violence to their inherent nature or *swabhava*.

In England, he had plenty of leisure. The examinations for the bar did not require much exertion. He, therefore, prepared for and passed the London Matric and learnt enough Latin to enable him to study Roman Law in the original. After subscribing to and attending the prescribed dinners, Gandhiji was called to the bar in 1891.

He had, during his stay in London, moved chiefly among vegetarians, reformers and clergymen. The last were anxious to mould and save his soul in their particular way, which, however, made no impression on him. But his contact with clergymen made him think deeply about religion and introduced him to his own. He studied the *Gita* in Arnold's translation and he greatly liked it. He also read Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. He read the Bible. The Old Testament did not impress him. But the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount with its absolute and unconditional non-violence, appealed to him, as its teachings conformed with the Vaishnavite-*cum*-Jain ideas and practices in which he had been brought up at home. He thought then, as afterwards, that in spite of the war setting of the *Gita*, its fundamental morality was not different from that of the New Testament. In other respects he found the *Gita* a more profound scripture. That a young man at that time, when Western superiority in all fields including morality and religion was almost universally recognised, could come out unscathed from the welter of Western civilisation, did hold a promise for the future.

What was the net result of his three years' stay in England? He remained as diffident and as shy as ever, "sitting tongue-tied,

never speaking except when spoken to". His efforts at public speaking were a dismal failure. At a farewell party given to friends, all that he could with difficulty say was, "Thank you, gentlemen, for having kindly responded to my invitation." He knew no law that would be useful to him in his practice in the Indian courts. But it was a great good fortune for him that he had remained true to the three vows he had taken at the instance of his mother before leaving for England. So far as sex was concerned, he believed his abstinence was due to God's grace. He writes: "Who that has prided himself on his spiritual strength has not seen it humbled to the dust?"

# 2

# South African Struggle

In 1891 Gandhi returned to India as a full-fledged barrister. But he knew nothing of law or law courts. He had not much confidence in himself in spite of the fact that he had been told that common honesty and industry, of which he had a fair share, were enough for a lawyer to make a living. He could not start practice in Rajkot, for as he says, "I had hardly the knowledge of a qualified *vakil* and yet I expected to be paid ten times his fee!" He, therefore, with the advice of friends established himself in Bombay where the expenses were high and the practice nil. Gandhi, just like every young barrister, attended the High Court every day. But this benefited him little. His first small cause case was a dismal failure. He stood up to argue the case but he suffered from such a stage fright that he remained tongue-tied and handed over the brief to a brother lawyer and rushed home in shame, without even knowing the result of the case. And this man in after life was able to address meetings of lakhs of people. Another difficulty that presented itself to him was that he was required to pay commission for every case that was handed over to him. This he was too honest to do, though he was assured that some of the highest in the profession did so. He therefore searched for a teacher's job. Failing in this, he shifted to Rajkot. Here he was more successful in drafting petitions than in conducting cases before the court. However, even in drafting petitions he had to compromise on the question of paying a commis-

sion to the lawyers who asked him to draft them. He had also a taste of the bureaucratic and arrogant behaviour of officers, whether British or Indian. Further, the intrigues of a small Indian state were alien to his nature. He, therefore, availed himself of the opportunity to sail for South Africa where Indians from many provinces had settled themselves as freed or indentured labourers, petty officials and merchants. A firm, Dada Abdulla & Co., had extensive business in South Africa. Their representative in Rajkot approached Gandhi's brother. They had a civil suit involving £ 40,000/- pending in a South African court. They had a European lawyer but he had to be helped as the accounts and correspondence of the firm were in Gujarati. The engagement was for a year and the remuneration, first-class return fare and a sum of £ 105/- all found. Gandhi closed with the offer and sailed for South Africa in April 1893 and reached Durban in May. He had contracted to be there for a year but circumstances detained him, with two breaks in between, till the end of the year 1914. These were the most formative years of his life. Here he lived and developed his philosophy of life and the new techniques of satyagraha (civil resistance), of fighting group injustice and rectifying group wrong.

The Indian community in South Africa consisted of indentured and freed labourers and a few merchants and their clerks and assistants. Indentured labourers were treated by the white employers on the plantations as semi-slaves. The rest suffered from various disabilities with regard to rights of citizenship, trade and owning of land and residence. They suffered from other social disabilities too. In trains and trams they had to travel in separate compartments. They were not admitted to European hotels and generally they were looked down upon as belonging to an inferior race. They had been hounded out by the white colonists from the Orange Free State. In the Transvaal, the free Indians had to pay a capitation tax of three pounds per head. They could own no land except in locations reserved for them by the Government. The locations were not enlarged with the increase of population. They were in unhygienic surroundings far from cities with no municipal facilities of light, water, drainage, etc. These unhygienic conditions were accentuated by the living habits of Indians indifferent to cleanliness. Even in such locations they could not have freeholds of their lands.

In Natal, measures to oust them from the Colony were under contemplation.

Gandhi reached South Africa unaware of these circumstances. In a few days he had to taste the bitter cup of the humiliation from which his countrymen there suffered. He visited the court in Durban. When he appeared in the court, his dress attracted attention. In those days he wore a tail-coat and a turban. The latter was a matter of annoyance to the judge. He was asked to remove his head-dress which he refused to do and left the court room. As the case in which his help was required was conducted in Pretoria where the respondent lived, he had to go there. The journey was by rail and coach. Though he had a first-class passenger ticket, he was not allowed to travel by that class. He was thrown outside the compartment and had to pass a sleepless wintry night in a wayside station waiting-room. In the coach he was actually assaulted. At Johannesburg, he was refused accommodation in any European hotel. When he told his Indian merchant host of the humiliation he had suffered on the journey, he was told : "Only we can live in a land like this, because, for making money we do not mind pocketing insults. ..." Gandhi thought of abandoning his commission and returning to India. He however decided to see through what he had undertaken. To run away from his job would, he thought, be cowardice.

He somehow reached Pretoria and took up his work of helping the white senior counsel. While practising in India, he had come to the conclusion that to meet the ends of justice better, the lawyer's duty was to make every effort to get the parties together and have the dispute settled out of court. He tried this method here and succeeded. The parties who were related to each other through his help came to a compromise, mutually honourable and acceptable.

His term of contract was drawing to a close and he was ready to return to India. He had, however, utilised his time well. He had acquainted himself with the grievances of all classes of his people and the handicaps they suffered from, and had in a small way organised them to meet regularly for exchanging ideas. He had been approached by all classes, the indentured and the freed labourers, the merchants and the clerks for advice and help, which he

readily gave. He had also made valuable European contacts, specially among the clergy, through Mr. A.W. Baker, the attorney in the case, who was also a local preacher.

After the compromise had been arranged, his contract with Abdulla Sheth was over and he returned to Durban on his way to India but his host, Abdulla Sheth, would not allow him to go without organising a farewell party in his honour. At this party his gaze accidentally fell on a local paper containing a paragraph about a Bill to be introduced to disfranchise the Indians. He drew the attention of the guests present to the Bill and asked them what they proposed to do about it. They said they were helpless. Abdulla Sheth said, "What can we understand in these matters? We can only understand things that affect our trade....We are after all lame men, being unlettered. We generally take in newspapers simply to ascertain the daily market rates, etc. What can we know of legislation? Our eyes and ears are the European attorneys here." Gandhiji asked, "There are so many young Indians born and educated here. Do not they help you?" "They!" exclaimed Abdulla Sheth in despair. "They never care to come to us, and to tell you the truth, we care less to recognize them. Being Christians, they are under the thumb of the white clergymen who, in their turn, are subject to the Government."

Abdulla Sheth and others at the meeting told Gandhiji that if he could stay and advise them about the steps they had to take to see that their meagre rights were protected, they would give him all the necessary help that was needed including finances. They wanted him to stay for a month more. Gandhiji consented. The dinner finished, the farewell meeting was turned into an action committee meeting. A petition was drawn up and sent to the Natal Assembly. The Bill, however, was passed. But it had yet to receive the sanction of the Crown. There was therefore some slight hope. This organisation drew a petition protesting against the Bill and praying to the Crown to refuse consent. The petition was signed by some thousands of Indians. It was duly sent to the Colonial Sécretary. The result was that the Bill was vetoed by the Crown. This encouraged the Indian community in South Africa, and it insisted upon Gandhiji remaining in South Africa. He consented. They said they would bear all his expenses. However, living on

public funds did not appeal to Gandhiji. He told them that it was quite possible that in the course of his public work, he might have to say "hard things". He also argued that not being a white barrister, he might not be effective in the courts. He would therefore want them only to give him their legal work. This would be a sufficient sacrifice for them. This proposal they readily accepted and Gandhiji enrolled himself as an advocate of the Natal Supreme Court.

Soon the temporary committee that had organised the agitation against the Bill was put on a permanent footing and the organisation created was called the Natal Indian Congress. A brief constitution was drawn up. The members had to pay a fee of three pounds annually. The organisation, unlike the Congress at home, had to work throughout the year. This was in the middle of 1894.

The Natal Congress organised meetings of its members at least once a month. The meetings were politically educative. For the members it was a new experience. The community now set itself, under Gandhiji's lead, to put its house in order. Measures for cleanliness and public hygiene and education were undertaken. This led to the consolidation of the Indians in South Africa irrespective of all distinctions of caste, creed or province. In Cape Town and the Transvaal also, associations on the lines of the Natal Congress were formed. All the Indian associations had under Gandhiji's guidance to perform the double task of agitation and reform of the community.

In 1896 Gandhiji returned to India. He had been in South Africa by then for three years. He felt that his presence there would be needed for an indefinite period if the useful work already done there was to be consolidated and Indians could live there as free citizens. He therefore wanted to take his family there. While in India, he worked for the cause of the South African Indians. He put himself in touch with Indian leaders, especially Gokhale, Tilak and Pherozeshah Mehta. He published a pamphlet on the condition of Indians in South Africa and addressed public meetings in Bombay and Madras. In Calcutta he could not make any headway. The Indian politicians and newspaper editors told him that they had difficulties enough in India to think in terms of the

condition of Indians in South Africa. The only sympathetic hearing that he got was from Mr. Saunders, the editor of *The Englishman*. About this he says, "Mr. Saunders, editor of *The Englishman*, claimed me as his own. He placed his office and paper at my disposal. He even allowed me the liberty of making whatever changes I liked in the leading article he had written on the situation, the proof of which he sent me in advance. It is no exaggeration to say that a friendship grew up between us. He promised to render me all the help he could, carried out the promise to the letter, and kept on his correspondence with me until the time when he was seriously ill.... What Mr. Saunders liked in me was my freedom from exaggeration and my devotion to truth. He subjected me to a searching cross-examination before he began to sympathize with my cause, and he saw that I had spared neither will nor pains to place before him an impartial statement of the case even of the white man in South Africa and also to appreciate it." He adds : "My experience has shown me that we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other party."

While still in Calcutta, he received a cable from South Africa to return. He immediately took passage and returned, this time with his family. In the interval the white population there was incensed against him, as his activities in India with regard to the condition of Indian settlers in South Africa were represented in the Press to be inimical to the white population. As a result, on landing he was assaulted by a white mob and would have been lynched but for timely police protection. With difficulty he reached his friend Rustomji's house, where his family had already been taken. The house was surrounded by the mob, which threatened to set it on fire unless Gandhiji was delivered to it. To save his friend from such a calamity he was advised by the police to disguise himself as an Indian constable, which he did and left the house undetected. When the agitation subsided, the authorities were willing to prosecute his assailants if Gandhiji so wished. He, however, declined saying, "I have already made up my mind not to prosecute my assailants. I cannot see that they are at fault. What information they had was obtained from their leaders....I would not seek redress in a court of law." This, coupled with the true reports of his speeches in India which he showed to pressmen and the authorities,

put the European community at ease and created an atmosphere of friendship for him.

Gandhi from now on settled down to his practice. In addition, he engaged himself in public work connected with the social and political uplift of his countrymen there. At this time, he, in addition to his other preoccupations, concerned himself with the education of children. There were two children of his own and one child of his sister. He did not want them to be sent to missionary schools, which alone admitted Indian children. He also wanted their education to be through the mother-tongue and not through a foreign language, English. Further, he believed that children should not be separated from their parents in their formative years. He did not believe in mere book-learning. Physical work must be combined with literary education. These ideas guided him to try other experiments in education after he had initiated the satyagraha movement in India in 1921. This movement, among other things, called upon the students in India to boycott educational institutions established by the foreign Government or aided by it. Ultimately, these experiments led to the formulation of Basic Education, *Nai Talim*.

Gandhiji, as we have said, concerned himself not only with fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa but also with reform of the community. The Indians there were indifferent to public hygiene as they are here even now. Gandhiji not only exhorted them to keep their houses and surroundings clean, he also helped them to organise themselves for the purpose. The difficulties that he had to face in this respect were immense. Only his patience enabled him to produce some effect on his community. He says: "I had some bitter experiences. I saw that I could not so easily count on the help of the community in getting it to do it sown duty, as I could in claiming for it rights. At some places I met with insults, at others with polite indifference. It was too much for people to bestir themselves to keep their surroundings clean. To expect them to find money for the work was out of the question. These experiences taught me, better than ever before, that without infinite patience it was impossible to get the people to do any work. It is the reformer who is anxious for the reform, and not society, from which he should expect nothing better than opposition, abhorrence

and even mortal persecution. Why may not society regard as retrogression what the reformer holds dear as life itself ?" This is true of India even today with only a slight difference.

During the Boer War he organised an ambulance corps of Indians. He did this, as he said, as a loyal citizen of the Empire. With those who were against the move he argued, "It is true that we are helots in the Empire but so far we have tried to better our condition, continuing the while to remain in the Empire. That has been the policy of all our leaders in India and ours too. And if we desire to win our freedom... as members of the British Empire, here is a golden opportunity for us to do so by helping the British in the war." Military help was out of the question. He, therefore, set himself the task of raising an ambulance corps. But the Indian offer of help was rejected until the British armies were in dire distress and help from any quarter was welcome. The Ambulance Corps acquitted itself creditably and its services were recognised by the authorities. It consisted predominantly of indentured labourers. This brought Gandhiji in greater contact with them. It also brought the different Indian castes and communities closer together. It enhanced the reputation of the Indians in the eyes of the whites.

After this he thought that his work in South Africa was over and he would be there more for money-making than for any service to the community. His friends in India were also impressing upon him the need to return. He felt that if he was to be in public life, his services would be more useful in India than in South Africa. However, all the classes of Indians there insisted that he should remain in their midst and that there was plenty of public work which could yet be done and more effectively, if he were in their midst. But Gandhiji was determined to return. Leaders of the Indian community would only consent to his going back to India if he promised to return, should they need him within a year.

He returned to India in 1901. Some interesting thing happened before he left. As on the previous occasion, more so on this occasion, he received many costly gifts, some from his clients and others from his admirers. The question before him was whether he could use these costly gifts for himself and his family! He says he passed a sleepless night debating this question. In the

morning his mind was made up that all the gifts must be returned to the community for public purposes. But some of these gifts had been specifically donated for Kasturba. He had long arguments with her and ultimately she consented and a public trust was made not only of the gifts he had then received but also of those received on the previous occasion. I record this here because now that our leaders are in power and receive costly gifts from those whom they benefit at public expense, they need to keep before them this example.

Gandhiji settled in Bombay and began his practice in the High Court. But as he was interested in public work, he went round the country to make himself familiar with the existing social conditions. In those days, everybody who had any desire to participate in public work would attend the annual session of the Congress and become its member. Its membership then was confined to English-educated Indians. The Congress session was to be held in Calcutta that year. Gandhiji left Bombay to attend the session, presided over by Dinshaw Wacha. As it happened, he was travelling in the same train as the President-elect, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Chimanlal Setalvad. Gandhiji desired to move a resolution in the Congress about the condition of Indians in South Africa. He, therefore, asked for time to talk over the matter with these leaders. They were travelling in a special saloon. He was asked to join them for one station. He spoke to them but they seemed only slightly interested. Gandhiji recalls Pherozeshah Mehta telling him: "Gandhi, it seems nothing can be done for you. Of course, we will pass the resolution you want. But what rights have we in our own country? I believe that, so long as we have no power in our own land, you cannot fare better in the Colonies."

It will not be out of place to record here the description that Gandhiji gives about the annual session of the Congress. He says: "The volunteers were clashing against one another. You asked one of them to do something. He delegated it to another, and he in his turn to a third, and so on; and as for the delegates, they were neither here nor there.

"I made friends with a few volunteers. I told them some things about South Africa, and they felt somewhat ashamed. I tried to bring home to them the secret of service. They seemed to under-

stand, but service is no mushroom growth. It presupposes the will first and then experience. There was no lack of will on the part of those good simple-hearted young men, but their experience was nil. The Congress would meet three days every year and then go to sleep. What training could one have out of a three days' show once a year? And the delegates were of a piece with the volunteers. They had no better or longer training. They would do nothing themselves. 'Volunteer, do this,' 'Volunteer, do that,' were their constant orders.

"Even here I was face to face with untouchability in a fair measure. The Tamilian kitchen was far away from the rest. To the Tamil delegates even the sight of others, whilst they were dining, meant pollution. So a special kitchen had to be made for them in the College compound, walled in by wicker-work. It was full of smoke which choked you. It was a kitchen, dining-room, washroom, all in one—a close safe with no outlet. To me this looked like a travesty of *varnadharma* (duties of the four fundamental divisions of Hindu society). If, I said to myself, there was such untouchability between the delegates of the Congress, one could well imagine the extent to which it existed amongst their constituents. I heaved a sigh at the thought.

"There was no limit to insanitation. Pools of water were everywhere. There were only a few latrines, and the recollection of their stink still oppresses me. I pointed it out to the volunteers. They said pointblank: 'That is not our work, it is the scavenger's work.' I asked for a broom. The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine. But that was for myself. The rush was so great, and the latrines were so few, that they needed frequent cleaning; but that was more than I could do. So I had to content myself with simply ministering to myself. And the others did not seem to mind the stench and the dirt.

"But that was not all. Some of the delegates did not scruple to use the verandahs outside their rooms for calls of nature at night. In the morning I pointed out the spots to the volunteers. No one was ready to undertake the cleaning, and I found no one to share the honour with me of doing it."

Gandhiji wanted to offer his services and was given clerical work to sort out the many letters for the General Secretary,

Sri Ghoshal, to see. After he had quietly and satisfactorily done the work, he excited the curiosity of the Secretary, who asked him about himself. When Gandhiji told him about his career, he expressed his regret for giving him merely clerical work. Gandhiji said: "Please don't worry. What am I before you ? You have grown grey in the service of the Congress, and are as an elder to me. I am but an inexperienced youth. You have put me under a debt of obligation by entrusting me with the work. For I want to do Congress work, and you have given me the rare opportunity of understanding the details." This will show our younger generation how through discipline, humility and respect for elders, Gandhiji moulded his life. He was not a born genius.

He had been told in the train, as has been said earlier, that he could move his resolution on South Africa. In that connection what Gandhiji says about the working of the Subjects Committee and the Congress session would be of interest today.

"The presidential address was a book by itself. To read it from cover to cover was out of the question. Only a few passages were therefore read.

"After this came the election of the Subjects Committee. Gokhale took me to the Committee meetings.

"Sir Pherozeshah had of course agreed to admit my resolution, but I was wondering who would put it before the Subjects Committee, and when. For there were lengthy speeches to every resolution, all in English to boot, and every resolution had some well-known leader to back it. Mine was but a feeble pipe amongst those veteran drums, and as the night was closing in, my heart beat fast. The resolutions coming at the fag-end were, so far as I can recollect, rushed through at lightning speed. Everyone was hurrying to go. It was 11 o'clock. I had not the courage to speak. I had already met Gokhale, who had looked at my resolution. So I drew near his chair and whispered to him: 'Please do something for me.' He said: 'Your resolution is not out of my mind. You see the way they are rushing through the resolutions. But I will not allow yours to be passed over.'

'So we have done?' said Sir Pherozeshah Mehta.

'No, no, there is still the resolution on South Africa. Mr. Gandhi has been waiting long,' cried out Gokhale.

'Have you seen the resolution?' asked Sir Pherozeshah.

'Of course.'

'Do you like it?'

'It is quite good.'

'Well then, let us have it, Gandhi.'

I read it trembling.

Gokhale supported it.

'Unanimously passed,' cried out everyone.

'You will have five minutes to speak to it, Gandhi,' said Mr. Wacha.

"The procedure was far from pleasing to me. No one had troubled to understand the resolution, everyone was in a hurry to go, and, because Gokhale had seen the resolution, it was not thought necessary for the rest to see it or understand it!

"The morning found me worrying about my speech. What was I to say in five minutes ? I had prepared myself fairly well but the words would not come to me. I had decided not to read my speech but to speak *ex tempore*. But the facility for speaking that I had acquired in South Africa seemed to have left me for the moment.

"As soon as it was time for my resolution, Mr. Wacha called out my name. I stood up. My head was reeling. I read the resolution somehow. Someone had printed and distributed amongst the delegates copies of a poem he had written in praise of foreign emigration. I read the poem and referred to the grievances of the settlers in South Africa. Just at this moment Mr. Wacha rang the bell. I was sure I had not yet spoken for five minutes. I did not know that the bell was rung in order to warn me to finish in two minutes more. I had heard others speak for half an hour or three quarters of an hour, and yet no bell was rung for them. I felt hurt and sat down as soon as the bell was rung. But my child-like intellect thought then that the poem contained an answer to Sir Pherozeshah. There was no question about the passing of the resolution. In those days there was hardly any difference between visitors and delegates. Everyone raised his hand and all resolutions were passed unanimously. My resolution also fared in this wise and so lost all its importance for me. And yet the very fact that it was passed by the Congress was enough to delight my heart.

The knowledge that the *imprimatur* of the Congress meant that of the whole country was enough to delight anyone."

Thanks to Gandhiji's leadership of the Congress, from 1920 all this is changed. He made it not merely the organisation of the English-educated Indians but also of the masses. He gave it a democratic constitution with a permanent membership. He provided work throughout the year through his constructive programme, necessitating a permanent office with branches all over the country. He also made it the instrument of struggle against foreign rule. He wanted to limit the number of delegates to make the annual session a businesslike affair. In this direction his efforts did not succeed, as the leaders wanted to retain its propagandist and demonstrative character. Today what remains is only the latter function. So far as the volunteers are concerned, there is only a little improvement. Even today they are more anxious to witness the session for show than to derive inspiration from it. As for rushing through business and the unanimity with which resolutions are passed, I am afraid, things remain as they were in the beginning of the century. In those days, it was the busy members of the legal profession who were in a hurry to finish their work in the Congress to go back to their lucrative profession. Today, it is the ministers in the Government who want to finish the work of the Congress session as soon as possible and return to their work in their respective capitals. So far as the unanimity with which the resolutions were passed, it is today even more complete than it was in the pre-Gandhian era. The Congress of today tries to impress upon the public the unity which is lacking in its ranks by the unanimity with which all its resolutions are passed.

Inside a year, Gandhiji received a cable from South Africa that the situation there was serious and that Mr. Chamberlain, the then Secretary of State, was expected and that his (Gandhiji's) presence was therefore necessary. Gandhiji thought that if he went, his stay there would extend to a year. As he did not take his family with him this time, he retained his establishment in Bombay. When he reached South Africa he was astounded by what he saw. It was expected that the status of Indians would improve for having rendered in the war voluntary and meritorious service. Also, one of the reasons given by the British

Government for the Boer War was the ill-treatment of Indians at the hands of the Boers in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. However, instead of conditions for the Indians improving, they had become much worse. At Durban a deputation of Indians headed by Gandhi waited upon Chamberlain. He gave them a courteous hearing and promised to confer with the Natal Government. Another deputation was organised to wait upon him at Pretoria again with Gandhi at its head. But the newly created Asiatic Department struck out Gandhi's name.

They first thought that Gandhi had entered the Transvaal without a proper permit. When they knew that he had a permit, the Chief of the Department there sent word through an Indian that he must appear before him. When Gandhi went there, the officer told him in peremptory tones: "What brings you here?" Gandhi replied, "I have come here at the request of my fellow countrymen to help them with my advice." "But don't you know that you have no right to come here? The permit you hold was given you by mistake. You cannot be regarded as a domiciled Indian. You must go back. You shall not wait on Mr. Chamberlain. It is for the protection of the Indians here that the Asiatic Department has been especially created. Well, you may go." Gandhiji records: "With this he bade me good-bye, giving me no opportunity for a reply." Because of the insult thus offered to their leader, the deputation said that they would not wait on Chamberlain, but Gandhiji persuaded them to meet him and represent the Indian case under another leader. The result of the interview was however nil. Chamberlain told them: "You know that the Imperial Government has little control over self-governing Colonies. Your grievances seem to be genuine. I shall do what I can, but you must try your best to placate the Europeans, if you wish to live in their midst."

The authorities, afraid of Indian trade competition and racial prejudice, were determined to keep South Africa a white colony, and to prevent fresh Indian emigration and make the position of resident Indians so uncomfortable as would oblige them to quit or remain as slaves.

The Asiatic Department, of which we have made mention above, was created ostensibly for the protection of the interests of Asiatics. It was manned by white officials from India and was used to treat Indians

as an inferior people, who could be insulted with impunity. They brought this overbearing attitude towards Indians with them. · Instead, therefore, of helping the Indian settlers, they proved a hindrance in the way of their getting their legitimate rights, restricted as they were. To make matters worse, the Department was full of corruption. To save the Indians from its tyranny was a hard task. Gandhiji had therefore to decide about his future.

At this time he came to the conclusion that he must remain in South Africa indefinitely even though India presented a larger field for his public activity. He therefore enrolled himself as an attorney in the Transvaal Supreme Court and settled down at Johannesburg.

In 1904, Gandhiji assumed responsibility for conducting *Indian Opinion,* a weekly. About this he says that though he was not the editor, he "had to bear the brunt of the work, having for most of the time to be practically in charge of the journal". He adds, "I poured out my soul in its columns, and expounded the principles and practice of Satyagraha as I understood it. During ten years, that is, until 1914, excepting the intervals of my enforced rest in prison, there was hardly an issue of *Indian Opinion* without an article from me. I cannot recall a word in those articles which was set down without thought or deliberation, or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed the journal became for me a training in self-restraint, and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts." He also tells us about the ideals which he set before himself as a journalist. He writes: "In the very first month of *Indian Opinion,* I realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test?"

I quote these passages to show the ideals that Gandhiji kept before himself as a journalist. These ideals are needed much more in these days than when he conducted *Indian Opinion.* Gandhiji

had not only to give his time to the journal but also all the finances that he could save from his earnings.

In 1906 there was the so-called Zulu rebellion. Gandhiji again organised an ambulance corps of Indians and took charge of the Negro wounded whom the white doctors and nurses would not touch. In spite of disappointments and rebuffs, he wanted Indians to do their duty as good citizens of the Empire. He somehow felt then that the sum total of its activities was for the good of Indians at home and abroad. About this so-called Zulu rebellion he says that he did not think that there was any real rebellion. What had happened was "that a Zulu chief had advised non-payment of a new tax imposed on his people, and had assagaied* a sergeant who had gone to collect the tax". In this connection Gandhiji writes: "The wounded in our charge were not wounded in battle. A section of them had been taken prisoners as suspects. The General had sentenced them to be flogged. The flogging had caused severe sores. These, being unattended to, were festering. The others were Zulu friendlies.

"This was no war but a man-hunt, not only in my opinion, but also in that of many Englishmen with whom I had occasion to talk. To hear every morning reports of the soldiers' rifles exploding like crackers in innocent hamlets, and to live in the midst of them was a trial. But I swallowed the bitter draught, especially as the work of my Corps consisted only in nursing the wounded Zulus."

All these cruelties perpetrated by the whites on the native population whose lands they had occupied, brought vividly before Gandhiji the horrors of war. Even this experience did not shake his faith in the goodness of the Empire, whose citizen he aspired to be and wanted his countrymen to follow his example. It was only long after that he realised that this Empire, as every other, was born in sin. When he realised this, he called it 'satanic'.

Even while with the Ambulance Corps Gandhiji was summoned to face fresh complications. A new ordinance was published in the Transvaal Government Gazette which breathed in every clause hatred against the Indians. Its provisions, in brief, laid down that every Indian, man, woman or child above eight, entitled to reside in the Transvaal, must get registered again and get a fresh certificate. Marks

*A wooden missile of South African tribes.

of identification on the body were to be noted. Whoever failed to register before a certain date was guilty of an offence for which he could be fined, imprisoned or deported. Parents were to apply on behalf of minors and bring them to the Registrar for finger-prints. Certificates of registration were to be produced whenever required by the police, who could enter private houses at will to inspect them. Certificates were to be produced on all conceivable occasions, while attending law courts, getting business and even cycle permits. Failure to comply with the regulations framed was a criminal offence. The Ordinance if passed, it was felt, would reduce Indians, whatever their status, to the position of criminals. About this Gandhiji says: "I have never known legislation of this nature being directed against free men in any part of the world.... There are some drastic laws directed against criminal tribes in India, with which this Ordinance can be easily compared and will be found not to suffer by the comparison....Finger-prints are required by law only from criminals."

A meeting of leading Indians was called. Gandhiji explained the implications of the proposed law. He said: "This is a very serious crisis. If the Ordinance were passed and if we acquiesced in it, it would be imitated all over South Africa. As it seems to me, it is designed to strike at the very root of our existence in South Africa. It is not the last step, but the first step with a view to hounding us out of the country. We are therefore responsible for the safety, not only of the ten or fifteen thousand Indians in the Transvaal but of the entire Indian community in South Africa. Again, if we fully understand all the implications of this legislation, we shall find that India's honour is in our keeping. For the Ordinance seeks to humiliate not only ourselves but also the motherland.... We are innocent, and insult offered to a single innocent member of a nation is tantamount to insulting the nation as a whole. It will not, therefore, do to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from the onslaught. But God will come to our help, if we calmly think out and carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and bearing the hardship, which such resistance brings in its train."

There was great excitement at the meeting. It was decided to hold a larger meeting to devise measures to resist this Black Legis-

lation. It was duly called on September 11, 1906. At this meeting the main resolution declared that "the Indians were solemnly determined not to submit to the Ordinance in the event of its becoming law in the teeth of their opposition and to suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission." One Sheth Haji Habib, a leading merchant, made an impassioned speech and said that they must take the pledge of resistance, with God as their witness. Gandhi warned the meeting about taking such a pledge. He explained the implications of the resolution in a memorable speech. He said: "There is a vast difference between this resolution and every other resolution we have passed up to date and there is a wide divergence also in the manner of making it. It is a very grave resolution we are making, as our existence in South Africa depends upon our fully observing it. The manner of making the resolution suggested by our friend is as much of a novelty as of a solemnity. I did not come to the meeting with a view to getting the resolution passed in that manner, which redounds to the credit of Sheth Haji Habib as well as it lays a burden of responsibility upon him. I tender my congratulations to him. I deeply appreciate his suggestion, but if you adopt it you too will share his responsibility. You must understand what is this responsibility, and as an adviser and servant of the community, it is my duty fully to explain it to you.

"We all believe in one and the same God, the differences of nomenclature in Hinduism and Islam notwithstanding. To pledge ourselves or to take an oath in the name of that God or with Him as witness is not something to be trifled with. If having taken such an oath we violate our pledge we are guilty before God and man. Personally I hold that a man, who deliberately and intelligently takes a pledge and then breaks it, forfeits his manhood.... I know that pledges and vows are, and should be, taken on rare occasions. A man who takes a vow every now and then is sure to stumble. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa when it would be in the fitness of things to take pledges, that crisis is surely now....The Government has taken leave of all sense of decency. We would only be betraying our unworthiness and cowardice, if we cannot stake our all in the face of the conflagration which envelops us and sit watching it with folded hands. There is no doubt, therefore, that the present

is a proper occasion for taking pledges. Every one of us must think out for himself if he has the will and the ability to pledge himself. Resolutions of this nature cannot be passed by a majority vote. Only those who take a pledge can be bound by it. This pledge must not be taken with a view to producing an effect on outsiders. No one should trouble to consider what impression it might have upon the Local Government, the Imperial Government, or the Government of India. Everyone must only search his own heart, and if the inner voice assures him that he has the requisite strength to carry him through, then only should he pledge himself and then only will his pledge bear fruit....I want to give you an idea of the worst that might happen to us in the present struggle ....We may have to go to jail, where we may be insulted. We may have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labour may be imposed upon us. We may be flogged by rude warders. We may be fined heavily and our property may be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today, we may be reduced to abject poverty tomorrow. We may be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in jail, some of us may fall ill and even die. In short, therefore, it is not at all impossible that we may have to endure every hardship that we can imagine, and wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse....A word about my personal responsibility. If I am warning you of the risks attendant upon the pledge, I am at the same time inviting you to pledge yourselves, and I am fully conscious of my responsibility in the matter. It is possible that a majority of those present here may take the pledge in a fit of enthusiasm or indignation but may weaken under the ordeal, and only a handful may be left to face the final test. Even then there is only one course open to someone like me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely but even if everyone else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would never violate my pledge. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying this out of vanity, but I wish to put you, especially the leaders upon the platform, on your guard. I wish respectfully to suggest it to you that if you have not the will or the ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated, you must not only not take the pledge yourselves but you must declare your

opposition before the resolution is put to the meeting and before its members begin to take pledges and you must not make yourselves parties to the resolution. Although we are going to take the pledge in a body, no one should imagine that default on the part of one or many can absolve the rest from their obligation. Everyone should fully realise his responsibility, then only pledge himself independently of others and understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do."

I have given the significant portions of this memorable speech of Gandhiji to show that in South Africa as early as 1906 his philosophy of satyagraha had been fully developed. It also shows the future Mahatma in the making. He was a man who could stand alone even if all the world were against him. Therefore, when the dark clouds spread over the Indian skies and the nation was divided and there were communal riots, Gandhiji often wanted the famous poem of Tagore, 'Ekla Chalo', to be recited. It was written in 1905 to strengthen the will of the Bengal revolutionaries, who could get refuge nowhere and who were often ostracized by their own countrymen for whom they put their lives in danger. The English translation of the poem is given below:

If they answer not to thy call, walk alone;
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall,
O thou of evil luck,
Open thy mind and speak out alone.
If they turn away and desert thee when crossing the wilderness,
O thou of evil luck,
Trample the thorns under thy tread,
And along the blood-lined track travel alone.
If they do not hold up the light when the night is troubled with storm,
O thou of evil luck,
With the thunder flame of pain ignite thine own heart,
And let it burn alone.

The translation scarcely does justice to the original.

The warning of Gandhiji about taking the pledge with 'God as witness' had no effect upon the gathering. The anger and enthusiasm were so great that the pledge was taken.

Gandhiji was however in no hurry. The Indians under his

advice tried all constitutional remedies. A deputation was sent to England. Before it started, Gandhiji imposed three conditions on the community. They were that (1) those who were ready to offer resistance to the Bill when passed should renew their pledge, (2) expenses to be incurred on the deputation must be collected in advance of its departure, (3) the maximum number of its members should be fixed. Further, he told them that those selected for the deputation should not take it as a matter of honour but as a call of duty. All these conditions were accepted and the deputation left for England. There they presented a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary. The Transvaal then was a Crown Colony. The Secretary of State for Colonies, Lord Elgin, disallowed the Bill. On learning this, the Indians were overjoyed. But they were disillusioned soon when it was known that an assurance had been given to the Transvaal representatives that if the Bill was passed after the 1st January, 1907, when the Colony would be granted self-government, it would get the Royal assent as a matter of course. This was British diplomacy! The Bill was again brought before the Assembly after the Transvaal was granted colonial self-government and was rushed through all its stages at a single sitting on March 21, 1907. The Act was to take effect from July 1, 1907 and Indians were called upon to apply for registration under it before July 31.

In July permit offices were opened. Indians began their peaceful picketing. The pickets were arrested. This had an exhilarating effect on the community. Very soon, Gandhiji and other leaders were arrested and tried. They pleaded guilty. When Gandhiji was awarded two months' simple imprisonment, he made a statement in the court. About this he writes : "...I said I thought there should be a distinction made between my case and those that were to follow. I had just heard from Pretoria that my compatriots there had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour, and had been fined a heavy amount, in lieu of payment of which they would receive a further period of three months' hard labour. If these men had committed an offence, I had committed a greater offence and I therefore asked the Magistrate to impose upon me the heaviest penalty." This statement is characteristic of Gandhiji. When he broke the law, he wanted maximum sentence for it. However, the Magistrate did not comply with his suggestion. The con-

viction of Gandhiji and other leaders was a signal for the intensification of the civil disobedience movement. In jail the Indian prisoners were treated as ordinary criminals. The satyagrahis were sentenced to hard labour and they were given humiliating work as that of scavenging and stone-breaking. But the prisoners on the whole stoically bore the discomforts and rigours of jail life.

Gandhiji had earlier shifted the office of *Indian Opinion* first to Phoenix and afterwards to the Tolstoy Farm. At the latter place lived the families of the satyagrahis in jail. All work including that of scavenging was done by the inmates. There were no caste, creed or class distinctions. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Europeans all lived a common life. It had also a school conducted by the elderly inmates for the children living there. Earlier, during the Zulu war while engaged in ambulance work Gandhiji had taken the vow of *brahmacharya.* He felt that procreation and consequent care of children were inconsistent with public work. (This appears to be an exaggeration. If it were true, ordinary citizens would be denied the opportunity for public work.) Gandhiji also believed that absolute control of the senses was essential to self-realisation. For him this realisation was possible through disinterested service of mankind. The rest of his philosophy—food, fasting, absolute faith in God, relying on His will and prayer—was also developed in South Africa while preparing for and carrying on this grim struggle. The manual of this philosophy of life, *Hind Swaraj,* was also written in those days.

The struggle continued. However, an offer was made by General (afterwards Marshal) Smuts that if the Indians voluntarily registered themselves, the Black Act would be repealed. Gandhiji, always trusting, agreed to this and induced the community to do so. There were some who had their doubts. Gandhiji argued with them. He said: "A Satyagrahi bids good-bye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting the opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the Satyagrahi is ready to trust him for the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed. Again to say that in trusting the Government we play into their hands is to betray an ignorance of the principles of Satyagraha. Suppose we register voluntarily, but the Govern-

ment commits a breach of faith and fails to redeem its promise to repeal the Act. Could we not then resort to Satyagraha? If we refused to show at the proper time the certificates of registration we take out, our registration would count for nothing, and Government could not distinguish between ourselves and the Indians who might enter the Transvaal surreptitiously.... A Satyagrahi differs from the generality of men in this, that if he submits to a restriction, he submits voluntarily, not because he is afraid of punishment, but because he thinks that such submission is essential to the common weal. And such is precisely our position regarding registration, which cannot be affected by any breach of faith, however flagrant, on the part of the Government. We are the creators of this position of ours, and we alone can change it. We are fearless and free, so long as we have the weapon of Satyagraha in our hands. And if anyone thinks that the community may not be as strong afterwards as it is today, I should say that he is not a Satyagrahi nor has he any understanding of Satyagraha. That would mean that the present strength of the community is not real strength but is in the nature of a momentary effervescence or intoxication, and if that is so, we do not deserve to win, and the fruits of victory will slip out of our hands even if we win. Suppose the Government first abrogates the Act and we then register voluntarily. Suppose further that the Government afterwards enacts the same obnoxious law and compels the Indians to register. What can then prevent the Government from pursuing such a course of action ? And if we are doubtful about our strength today, then too shall we be in an equally bad case. From whatever standpoint, therefore, we examine the settlement, it may be said that the community not only will not lose but will on the other hand gain by the compromise. And I am also of opinion, that when our opponents recognize our humility and sense of justice, they would give up or at least mitigate their opposition."

Though he could convince most of the members of the small group which was first consulted, he could not do so at a bigger meeting the same night. At this meeting there was a Pathan. He argued that Gandhiji had himself told them that only criminals gave their finger-prints. Gandhiji's reply was: "Even now I fully adhere to everything that I have written before about

finger-prints. Even now I say that in India finger-prints are required from criminal tribes. I have said before and say even now that it would be a sin in virtue of the Black Act to give even our signatures, not to talk of finger-prints. It is true that I have,—and I believe wisely,—laid great stress on this requisition of finger-prints. It was easier to rouse the community to a sense of the gravity of the situation by a reference to such a new and startling feature of the Act as the finger-prints than to minor items in which we had already yielded submission. And I saw from experience that the community grasped the situation at once. But circumstances have now changed. I say with all the force at my command, that what would have been a crime against the people yesterday is in the altered circumstances of today the hall-mark of a gentleman. If you require me to salute you by force and if I submit to you, I will have demeaned myself in the eyes of the public and in your eyes as well as in my own. But if I of my own accord salute you as a brother or fellow-man, that evinces my humility and gentlemanliness, and it will be counted to me as righteousness before the Great White Throne. That is how I advise the community to give the finger-prints."

The Pathan also accused Gandhiji of selling the community for 15,000 pounds. He said, "I swear with Allah as my witness, that I will kill the man who takes the lead in applying for registration." To this Gandhiji replied: "I can understand the feelings of Pathan friends. I am sure that no one else believes me to be capable of selling the community. I have already said that finger-prints will not be demanded from those who have sworn not to give them. I will render all possible help to any Pathan or other who wishes to register without giving finger-prints, and I assure him that he will get the certificate all right without violence being done to his conscience. I must confess, however, that I do not like the threat of death which the friend has held out. I also believe that one may not swear to kill another in the name of the Most High. I therefore take it, that it is only in a momentary fit of passion that this friend has taken the oath. However that may be, whether or not he carries out his threat, as the principal party responsible for this settlement and as a servant of the community, it is my clear duty to take the lead in giving finger-prints, and I pray to God that He graciously permit me so to do. Death is

the appointed end of all life. To die by the hand of a brother, rather than by disease or in such other way, cannot be for me a matter for sorrow. And if even in such a case I am free from the thoughts of anger or hatred against my assailant, I know that that will redound to my eternal welfare, and even the assailant will later on realise my perfect innocence."

After this the meeting dispersed. Next morning Gandhiji with some of the leaders of the community started for the Registration office to get the identity certificate. He wanted to set an example by being the first to register. On the way the Pathan mentioned above asked him where he was going. When he learnt that Gandhiji was going to the Registration office to get his identity certificate after giving finger-prints, he attacked him with a heavy cudgel blow. Gandhiji fainted with the words 'He Ram' on his lips. The authorities wanted to take Gandhiji to the hospital. But his friend, Rev. Doke, with whom he had come in contact earlier during the struggle, insisted on Gandhiji being taken to his house. Gandhiji records that the nursing that he got from him and his family was as good as he could expect at home.

The Pathan was arrested by the authorities. As soon as Gandhiji could write, he wrote to the Attorney-General that he did not want to prosecute the Pathan and his companion, that they may be released for his sake. But the Europeans of Johannesburg who had shown sympathy for Gandhiji wrote to the Attorney-General that those responsible for injuring Gandhiji must be prosecuted. They argued that it was not a question involving Gandhiji alone, it was a public question. The assailants had attacked Gandhiji in a public place and what they had done was a public offence. On this the Attorney-General proceeded against the offenders and they were sentenced to three months' hard labour. Afterwards the Pathan, realising his error, became Gandhiji's great friend.

We have said that Rev. Doke had come in contact with Gandhiji earlier. This is how Gandhiji records his meeting with him. "Some six months before this assault, he [Mr. Doke] came to my office and sent in his card. On seeing the word 'Reverend' before his name, I wrongly imagined that he had come, as some other clergymen did, to convert me to Christianity or to advise me to give

up the struggle or perhaps to express patronizing sympathy with the movement. Mr. Doke entered, and we had not talked many minutes before I saw how sadly I had misjudged him and mentally apologized to him. I found him familiar with all the facts of the struggle which were published in newspapers. He said, 'Please consider me as your friend in this struggle. I consider it my religious duty to render you such help as I can. If I have learnt any lesson from the life of Jesus, it is this that one should share and lighten the load of those who are heavily laden.' We thus got acquainted with each other, and every day marked an advance in our mutual affection and intimacy..... And it must not be supposed that Mr. Doke had not to suffer for according public support to the Indians in their struggle and for harbouring me under his roof. Mr. Doke was in charge of a Baptist church, and depended for his livelihood upon a congregation of Europeans, not all of whom entertained liberal views and among whom dislike of the Indians was perhaps as general as among other Europeans. But Mr. Doke was unmoved by it.... He said,'My dear friend, what do you think of the religion of Jesus? I claim to be a humble follower of Him, who cheerfully mounted the Cross for the faith that was in Him, and whose love was as wide as the world. I must take a public part in your struggle if I am at all desirous of representing Christ to the Europeans who, you are afraid, will give me up as punishment for it. And I must not complain if they do thus give me up. My livelihood is indeed derived from them, but you certainly do not think that I am associated with them for a living's sake, or that they are my cherishers. My cherisher is God; they are but the instruments of His Almighty will. It is one of the unwritten conditions of my connection with them, that none of them may interfere with my religious liberty. Please therefore stop worrying on my account. I am taking my place beside you in this struggle not to oblige the Indians but as a matter of duty. The fact, however, is that I have fully discussed this question with my dean. I gently informed him, that if he did not approve of my relations with the Indians, he might permit me to retire and engage another minister instead. But he not only asked me not to trouble myself about it but even spoke some words of encouragement....' "

I make no apology for recording what was told to Gandhiji

by this Christian priest. We consider ourselves religious people but our actions often belie our professions.

The Indians got themselves registered but the Black Act as promised was not taken away from the statute book.

Seeing the nature of the struggle, some prominent Europeans were attracted by it and expressed their opinion in favour of it. However, this help had only a marginal effect upon the final result of the struggle. But it shows, as Gandhiji says, that "all truthful movements spontaneously attract to themselves all manner of pure and disinterested help".

The Indian struggle was not confined to the Transvaal. Gandhiji had later on found that the compromise effected by him was greatly misunderstood in Natal. At that time his family was residing along with some other families of satyagrahis in Phoenix, somewhere near Pretoria. With the double object of explaining the position that he had taken and meeting the family, he travelled to Durban as soon as he was able to undertake the journey. Here a meeting of the Indians was called. When the meeting was almost coming to an end, the lights were suddenly put out and a Pathan rushed to the platform with a big stick. However, friends on the platform surrounded Gandhiji and he was safely taken out of the meeting. From Durban he went to meet his family. But his friends would not allow him to go alone. In spite of Gandhiji's remonstrance, they accompanied him. About this Gandhiji says that though he was intellectually convinced that death was no calamity but only a change, somehow at night he felt safer in the company of his friends. He records: "I have deliberately made a supreme attempt to cast out from my heart all fear whatsoever including the fear of death. Still I remember occasions in my life when I have not rejoiced at the thought of approaching death as one might rejoice at the prospect of meeting a long-lost friend. Thus man often remains weak notwithstanding all his efforts to be strong, and knowledge which stops at the head and does not penetrate into the heart is of but little use in the critical times of living experience. Then again the strength of the spirit within mostly evaporates when a person gets and accepts support from outside. A Satyagrahi must be always on his guard against such temptations." I record this to bring before

the reader the high conception he had of satyagraha and the satyagrahi.

During his stay at Phoenix he wrote extensively in *Indian Opinion* about what had impelled him to accept General Smuts' proposal. The result of this was that most of the Indians were convinced that Gandhiji's word must be accepted and they all rushed to get themselves registered. There was scarcely anybody who did not get himself registered.

However, soon General Smuts went back upon his word and "instead of repealing the Black Act, took a fresh step forward. He maintained the Black Act on the statute book and introduced into the legislature a measure, validating the voluntary registrations effected and the certificates issued subsequent to the date fixed by the Government in terms of that Act, taking the holders of the voluntary registration certificates out of its operation, and making further provision for the registration of Asiatics. Thus there came into force two concurrent pieces of legislation with one and the same object, and freshly arriving Indians as well as even later applicants for registration were still subject to the Black Act." All this appeared to justify the critics of Gandhiji. However, when he announced that the old and the new Acts will be resisted, the community rallied round his leadership. As usual, at first they adopted constitutional methods and approached General Smuts who after a time refused even to acknowledge Gandhiji's letters. There was no course left for the Indians but to offer resistance. An ultimatum was sent to the Government that if the new Act was passed, the Indians would make a bonfire of the certificates which they had voluntarily accepted with the conditions attached to them. This meant resistance not only to the old but also to the newly proposed law. The ultimatum also mentioned the date by which the certificates were to be burnt. This was considered as an act of impudence on the part of the Indians. About this Gandhiji writes: "...the Europeans looked upon the Indians as savages. If the Europeans had considered the Indians to be their equals, they would have found this letter perfectly courteous and would have given it most serious consideration. But the fact that the Europeans thought Indians to be barbarians was a sufficient reason for the Indians to write such a letter. The Indians

must either confess to their being barbarians and consent to be suppressed as such, or else they must take active steps in repudiation of the charge of barbarism."

After this letter was sent, the leaders collected all the certificates and brought them to the meeting that was arranged a few hours after the ultimatum was to expire. No answer to the letter had been received but the Indians yet hoped that an answer might come during the course of the meeting. What, however, came was a telegram expressing regret for the determination of the Indian community and announcing that there could be no change in the Government action. This telegram, instead of depressing the community, acted as a stimulant. It was greeted with cheers. What remained now was to act! The certificates already collected were put in a cauldron, already provided for containing paraffin. Those who had not given over their certificates and had brought them with themselves also consigned them to the fire. Thus began the second and more important phase of satyagraha in South Africa.

Soon another issue arose. A new bill called the Transvaal Immigrants Restriction Bill was passed by the Transvaal Assembly. Ostensibly it was of general application to all Asiatics but was specifically meant for the Indians. They had to pass an education test for entry into the Transvaal. This bill put further restrictions that the Indians must also produce their registration certificates. Though this was a fresh inroad on the rights of the Indians, it was debated whether resistance to this new law could be combined with the movement already started against the Black Act. It was felt that if the Indians did not protest against this Act, it would be considered that they had acquiesced in it. Therefore, the issue of this Act was combined with the previous issue. But before the new Act was made part of the movement, General Smuts was approached for its cancellation. He did not consent to this. He was rather incensed and argued that if the Indians were given an inch, they would demand an ell. It was then decided to send an outstanding Indian to test what the Government would do to enforce the new Act. Sorabji, a Parsi, was chosen for the purpose. It was expected that as soon as he crossed the border, he would be arrested but the authorities were not prepared to do so and

no restriction was put upon his movement. Ultimately, however, he was summoned before the court and ordered to leave the Transvaal within seven days. This he did not do and was given one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

But the Indians were determined to see that the authorities were roused to action. Therefore, a batch of immigrants crossed the border into the Transvaal from Natal. This time the Government took action. They were asked to leave the Transvaal within seven days. As they refused to do this, they were taken beyond the border and left there but they re-entered. When they did this, they were tried and each one of them was sentenced to three months' imprisonment or a fine of £ 50. They did not pay the fine and preferred to go to gaol.

The Indian residents in the Transvaal were not legally proceeded against though they had burnt their registration certificates. They now tried to find other ways to oblige the authorities to arrest them. They were required to produce their certificates on various occasions. This they refused to do and they were imprisoned. Soon the jails were filled. We have said already that the Indians in jail were given the lowest work which they did cheerfully. Soon Gandhiji was also arrested. The authorities thought that the arrest of their leader would demoralise the Indians but nothing of that sort happened. The punishments for breaking the Immigration Act included deportation. At first those convicted were taken beyond the borders of the Transvaal. The authorities saw that this did not involve them in very great trouble. Therefore, they thought of a method which would frighten the satyagrahis. They started deporting them back to India. Many of the satyagrahis were indentured and freed labourers. They had never been to India. However, they preferred to go to an unknown land where they had no friends, where they may not get any work, rather than yield. Gandhiji thought that these poor people would be harassed during the passage and would find themselves friendless on arrival in India. He therefore asked one of his staunch followers, P.K. Naidoo, to accompany them.

After some time it was decided to send a fresh deputation to England under Gandhiji's leadership. It was to approach the authorities there to see that the two laws which were the occasion

for satyagraha were either abrogated or so modified that they would not involve dishonour for Indians. The only thing that the deputation could achieve was to gain sympathy of some leading newspapers.

During this visit Gandhiji met some Indians who believed in the use of violence to free their country. They had arguments with Gandhiji about the futility of his method of agitation. Gandhiji answered those arguments and on the return journey he elaborated them in his book, *Indian Home Rule.*

In South Africa he was worried about funds. Many people who had gone to jail were prepared to bear hardships but they could not leave their families uncared for. Their maintenance required money. Soon he received a cheque for Rs. 25,000 from Ratanji Jamsetji Tata to be utilised for the struggle. This temporarily solved the question of funds. But it could not indefinitely serve the purpose of maintaining the families of the satyagrahis. Gandhiji, therefore, thought that it would be best if he could establish a home where all the families lived together and carried on the work of the establishment themselves. There was already an establishment at Phoenix which could be utilised. But this was about 480 km. away from Johannesburg. He wanted a plot of land nearby. He had a European friend, Kallenbach, a man of means in sympathy with the cause of the Indians. He agreed to purchase a farm for the settlement of the families of those who had gone to jail. The farm was more than 30 km. from Johannesburg. It had a small house and a lot of fruit trees. Gandhiji along with some families shifted there. The household and farm work was done by the inmates. The question arose about the food arrangements for the non-vegetarians. The farm could not afford to maintain separate kitchens. Gandhiji could not think of coercing non-vegetarians to take a vegetarian diet. He placed his difficulty before the non-vegetarian inmates. He told them that if they must have meat, he would even be prepared to help them in its preparation. But the non-vegetarians saw the wisdom of having only one kitchen and consented to be satisfied with a vegetarian diet.

There are a few things connected with this establishment to which I would like to draw the attention of the reader. One of them is Gandhiji's idea about public hygiene as practised at the

farm. He writes: "In spite of the large number of settlers, one could not find refuse or dirt anywhere on the farm. All rubbish was buried in trenches sunk for the purpose. No water was permitted to be thrown on the roads. All waste water was collected in buckets and used to water the trees. Leavings of food and vegetable refuse were utilized as manure. A square pit...was sunk near the house to receive the nightsoil, which was fully covered with the excavated earth and which therefore did not give out any smell. There were no flies, and no one would imagine that nightsoil had been buried there." Gandhiji brought these ideas of public hygiene to India and tried to inculcate them among his countrymen. He says: "If nightsoil was properly utilized, we would get manure worth lakhs of rupees and also secure immunity from a number of diseases. By our bad habits we spoil our sacred river banks and furnish excellent breeding grounds for flies with the result that the very flies which through our criminal negligence settle upon uncovered nightsoil defile our bodies after we have bathed. A small spade is the means of salvation from a great nuisance. Leaving nightsoil, cleaning the nose or spitting on the road is a sin against God as well as humanity, and betrays a sad want of consideration for others. The man who does not cover his waste deserves a heavy penalty even if he lives in a forest." The pity is that these ideas of Gandhiji eminently suited for keeping clean our villages and getting manure worth crores of rupees have not been put into practice here even after two decades of independence. Our sacred rivers are polluted by the city drains flowing into them. Nobody seems to think about such matters. They are too insignificant for those who have designed gigantic steel plants and river valley projects.

Gandhiji also talks of his experience in education. Here he had to teach mixed classes of boys and girls of various ages, with different mother-tongues, Gujarati, Tamil and Telugu. Some senior boys' services were requisitioned for the purpose of teaching. However, most of the work of teaching fell upon Gandhiji and Kallenbach. Teachers and the boys came to school after their day-meal, the forenoon being used for working on the establishment which included almost everything which a colony of that sort required—building, carpentry, farming and keeping

the establishment clean. There was also the question of religious teaching as the boys and girls belonged to different religions. But through love all these questions were solved without difficulty. About co-education Gandhiji says that there were no insurmountable difficulties. He says that "my faith and courage were at their highest in Tolstoy Farm". But he adds : "Experiments such as I have placed on record are not meant for imitation. Any teacher who imitated them would be incurring grave risk. I have here taken note of them only to show how far a man can go in certain circumstances and to stress the purity of the Satyagraha struggle. This very purity was a guarantee of its victory. Before launching on such experiments, a teacher has to be both father and mother to his pupils and to be prepared for all eventualities whatever, and only the hardest penance can fit him to conduct them."

Describing life at the farm, Gandhiji mentions the visit of Gokhale which gives a better idea of the character of this great patriot than the various books written about him by his political admirers and opponents. Gandhiji says: "There was no cot on the Farm, but we borrowed one for Gokhale. There was no room where he could enjoy full privacy. For sitting accommodation we had nothing beyond the benches in our school. Even so, how could we resist the temptation of bringing Gokhale in spite of his delicate health to the Farm? And how could he help seeing it, either? I was foolish enough to imagine that Gokhale would be able to put up with a night's discomfort and to walk about a mile and a half from the station to the Farm. I had asked him beforehand, and he had agreed to everything without bestowing any thought upon it, thanks to his simplicity and overwhelming confidence in me. It rained that day, as fate would have it, and I was not in a position suddenly to make any special arrangement. I have never forgotten the trouble to which I put Gokhale that day in my ignorant affection. The hardship was too much for him to bear and he caught a chill. We could not take him to the kitchen and dining-hall. He had been put up in Mr. Kallenbach's room. His dinner would get cold while we brought it from the kitchen to his room....Gokhale uttered not a syllable, but I understood from his face what a folly I had committed. When Gokhale came to know that all of us slept on the floor, he removed the cot which had been brought for him

and had his own bed too spread on the floor....Gokhale had a rule in life which seemed to me a bad rule. He would not permit anyone except a servant to wait upon him. He had no servant with him during this tour. Mr. Kallenbach and I entreated him to let us massage his feet. But he would not let us even touch him, and half jocularly, half angrily said: 'You all seem to think that you have been born to suffer hardships and discomforts, and people like myself have been born to be pampered by you. You must suffer today the punishment for this extremism of yours. I will not let you even touch me. Do you think that you will go out to attend to nature's needs and at the same time keep a commode for me? I will bear any amount of hardship but I will humble your pride.' Those words were to us like a thunderbolt, and deeply grieved Mr. Kallenbach and me. The only consolation was, that Gokhale wore a smile on his face all the while....Gokhale remembered only our will to serve, though he did not accord us the high privilege of serving him.... Gokhale bore everything cheerfully, but till the last never accepted the service which it was in our power to render. He had to take the food, etc., from our hands, but that he could not help.

"The next morning he allowed no rest either to himself or to us. He corrected all his speeches which we proposed to publish in book form. When he had to write anything, he was in the habit of walking to and fro and thinking it out. He had to write a small letter and I thought that he would soon have done with it. But no. As I twitted him upon it, he read me a little homily : 'You do not know my ways of life. I will not do even the least little thing in a hurry. I will think about it and consider the central idea. I will next deliberate as to the language suited to the subject and then sit to write. If everyone did as I do, what a huge saving of time would there be? And the nation would be saved from the avalanche of half-baked ideas which now threatens to overwhelm her.' "

I may mention here that Gokhale was the first Indian to appreciate the greatness of Gandhiji. At the time when he was in England in 1914, Boshe Sen, a well-known agricultural chemist, who now runs an experimental farm at Almora, happened to be there. Gokhale told him that this man would be the future leader of India. Boshe told me that at the time he ridiculed the idea and replied:

"This little man will be the future leader of India!" Boshe had afterwards to change his views radically. I relate this story here to show the great insight that Gokhale had about those with whom he came into contact.

Gandhiji also talks of Kallenbach. About him he says: "Kallenbach had been brought up in the lap of luxury and had never known what privation was. In fact, indulgence had been his religion. He had had his fill of all the pleasures of life, and he had never hesitated to secure for his comfort everything that money could buy. It was no commonplace for such a man to live, move and have his being on Tolstoy Farm, and to become one with the Indian settlers. This was an agreeable surprise for the Indians. Some Europeans classed Kallenbach either as a fool or a lunatic, while others honoured him for his spirit of renunciation. Kallenbach never felt his renunciation to be painful. In fact he enjoyed it even more than he had enjoyed the pleasures of life before. He would be transported with rapture while describing the bliss of a simple life, and for a moment his hearers would be tempted to go in for it. He mixed so lovingly with the young as well as the old, that separation from him even for a short time left a clearly felt void in their lives." This description of Kallenbach by Gandhiji gives a clear idea of what renunciation means. It does not mean a wry face and a sense of suffering or sacrifice. Unless we Indians learn to enjoy a simple and even an austere life and think in terms of suffering and sacrifice, we would not be effective in any public work we do. We shall always be thinking in terms of a return for our sacrifice.

It was while on the Tolstoy Farm that Gandhiji conceived the idea that drinking cow's milk was as bad as eating beef. It deprived the young of what nature had created for them. He, therefore, along with Kallenbach decided to eschew milk from his diet.

We have anticipated the events by describing the visit of Gokhale to Tolstoy Farm, even as in the *Autobiography*. Gokhale went to South Africa from England in October 1912. He was invited there by Gandhiji. He was the only leader who took interest in the condition of Indians there. Gandhiji had always kept him informed of events in South Africa. Gokhale was one of the politi-

cians who had free access to the officials both in India and in England. The English considered him as their friend. Even though he occasionally criticised the officials in India, he believed that the activities of the British in India were on the whole beneficent for his country. One does not know whether, like his other compatriots among the liberals, he also considered the advent of the British in India as a 'divine dispensation'.

His visit invoked great enthusiasm among the Indians. He was given an almost royal reception by his countrymen. In many of these receptions the Europeans also participated. Though he was conversant with what had happened so far, as was usual with him, he wanted to make himself thoroughly conversant with the facts. Having done that, he met the ministers. He had a couple of hours with the authorities. When he returned, he told Gandhiji: "You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the emigration law. The £3 tax will be abolished." From experience Gandhiji knew what reliance was to be placed on the words of authorities in South Africa. This time he expressed his doubts. He told Gokhale: "You do not know the ministers as I do. Being an optimist myself, I love your optimism, but having suffered frequent disappointments, I am not as hopeful in the matter as you are. But I have no fears either. It is enough for me that you have obtained this undertaking from the ministers. It is my duty to fight it out only where it is necessary and to demonstrate that ours is a righteous struggle. The promise given to you will serve as a proof of the justice of our demands and will redouble our fighting spirit if it comes to fighting after all. But I do not think I can return to India in a year and before many more Indians have gone to jail."

It would be of interest to record here an incident during Gokhale's visit which may be of some value regarding the language controversy that is going on in India today. Gandhiji always spoke to the Indians either in Gujarati or in Hindustani, which he called the *lingua franca* of India. As Gokhale did not know Hindustani, Gandhiji suggested to him that he might speak in his mother-tongue, Marathi, and he (Gandhiji) would translate his speech into Hindustani. Gokhale had a hearty laugh at this and

said: "I have quite fathomed your knowledge of Hindustani, an accomplishment upon which you cannot exactly be congratulated. But now you propose to translate Marathi into Hindustani. May I know where you acquired such profound knowledge of Marathi?" Gandhiji replied: "What is true of my Hindustani is equally true of my Marathi. I cannot speak a single word of Marathi, but I am confident of gathering the purport of your Marathi speech on a subject with which I am familiar. In any case, you will see that I do not misinterpret you to the people. There are others well versed in Marathi, who could act as your interpreters. But you will not perhaps approve of such arrangement. So please bear with me and do speak in Marathi. I too am desirous of hearing your Marathi speech in common with the Konkani friends." Gokhale replied: "You will always have your own way and there is no help for me as I am here at your mercy."

Whenever speaking to Indians while in South Africa, Gokhale spoke in Marathi. The translation was done into Hindustani by Gandhiji.

The visit of Gokhale had an exhilarating effect upon the Indians. The struggle was intensified. Among other disabilities, the Indians had to pay annually £3 as a capitation tax. This had been in existence since 1895 and people had grown used to it. Now that the Indians were progressively becoming conscious of the handicaps from which they suffered, it was decided that this obnoxious tax should be tagged on to other grievances for conducting satyagraha.

The promise made by the authorities to Gokhale, as anticipated by Gandhiji, was not carried out. As if all this was not enough, the Chief Justice of the Cape Supreme Court gave judgment that "all marriages were outside the pale of legal marriages in South Africa with the exception of such as were celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages". With one stroke of the pen this judgment nullified all Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages. Thousands of wives were thus declared by law to be living in concubinage. This also would prevent the children from inheriting their parents' property. This was the last straw. The Indian community could not tolerate the insult to their womenfolk. Satyagraha was intensified and extended. Women, who had so far been kept away from the struggle, could no more be res-

trained from joining it. Many of them, with Kasturbai, Gandhiji's wife, at their head, joined the movement, courted imprisonment and bore hardships of jail life.

It would be interesting to know how Kasturba came to join the struggle. Gandhiji had decided that women's satyagraha at first be commenced with the women living at Tolstoy Farm courting jail. He, therefore, talked to them and explained to them the difficulties that they would have to face in jail. They were all eager to join the movement. He then decided to approach the inmates of the Phoenix Ashram and explained to the women living there what he had explained to the sisters living at Tolstoy Farm. He, however, did not say anything to Kasturba. She came to know about what was going on. She told Gandhiji: "I am sorry that you are not telling me about this. What defect is there in me which disqualifies me for jail? I also wish to take the path to which you are inviting the others." To this Gandhiji replied: "You know I am the last person to cause you pain. There is no question of my distrust in you. I would be only too glad if you went to jail, but it should not appear at all as if you went at my instance. In matters like this everyone should act relying solely upon his own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request. And then if you began to tremble in the law court or were terrified by hardships in jail, I could not find fault with you, but how would it stand with me? How could I then harbour you or look the world in the face? It is fears like these which have prevented me from asking you too to court jail." Kasturba then said: "You may have nothing to do with me, if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle. I have nothing to think about, I am fully determined."

The joining of the women in the satyagraha movement and their going to jail started a spontaneous movement among the indentured labourers, who had been generally kept away from the struggle. However, they were not ignorant of its nature and implications. There were strikes in coal mines and plantations. The white masters put down the labourers with fire and sword. They drove them away from their homes. These harmless labourers

came in their hundreds to Gandhiji. They would soon swell into thousands. Gandhiji had to think quickly. He could not house and feed them. He, therefore, thought that the best course would be to make them break the law and court imprisonment. He informed them of the suffering that they would have to undergo while breaking the law. However, they were all determined under Gandhiji's leadership to defy the authorities and court imprisonment. Gandhiji then thought of marching them all from Natal to the Transvaal. In pursuance of this plan, some 5,000 indentured labourers marched under him and his lieutenants towards the border to cross over to the Transvaal. Thus began the non-violent invasion of the Transvaal. No effort was made to arrest the marchers at the border. They, therefore, directed their course to Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg. They marched on with the daily rations of a pound of bread and an ounce of sugar. When after seven days' march they neared Tolstoy Farm, the Government roused itself and arrested first Gandhiji and then all the leaders. Yet the cavalcade marched on. Ultimately the Government was obliged to arrest the whole moving mass of humanity. They were put in trains and taken back to their mines. They were not tried or jailed. At the mines they were surrounded by wires. Such enclosures were declared outstation jails and were staffed by the European employees of the factories. This reduced the labourers to utter helplessness. Yet the movement spread among the indentured labourers throughout the Union and they struck work. In many places this led to firing.

India, through Gokhale, had all the while been kept informed of the developments by Gandhiji and his successive lieutenants when he had to go to jail. There was a wave of indignation throughout India. Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy, publicly condemned the attitude of the Union Government. He justified the conduct of the satyagrahis. He also sent a trusted official to South Africa to help the Indians in whatever way he could. At this time Andrews and Pearson also reached South Africa at the instance of Gokhale. All this helped in the negotiations that brought the Indian struggle in South Africa to a satisfactory close. The Union Government could not keep thousands of men in jail. The labour strike was hitting the industrialists hard. The Government had therefore to yield.

To save face they appointed an all-white commission of inquiry of their own choice to go into the whole question. The leaders and afterwards all the arrested satyagrahis were released. But as no member on the Commission was appointed with the approval of the Indians, it was boycotted by the Indian community. They prepared for a fresh march which was announced for January 1, 1914. In the meantime there was a widespread strike of white employees in the Union Railways. Gandhiji postponed the contemplated march, saying that the Indian struggle was not conceived in the spirit of "harassing the Government nor of taking advantage of their difficulties". This decision of Gandhiji, inspired by the spirit of satyagraha, was greatly appreciated by the Europeans. One of General Smuts' secretaries jocularly told him, "I do not like your people and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do ? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness." Several others in the Government expressed similar sentiments.

Though no Indian was taken on the Commission, its report was 'favourable', inasmuch as it recommended compliance without delay with all the principal demands of the Indian community such as, for instance, the repeal of the £3 tax and validation of Indian marriages and recognition of the domicile certificates given in Natal to have validity in the whole of the Union and some other trifling concessions. Soon a Bill incorporating the decisions of the Commission was passed in the Union Parliament.

Thus ended the great struggle of Indians in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhiji, based upon truth and non-violence and the utmost regard for the means used. It is on the pattern of this struggle that the Indian independence movement was modelled. Having finished the task that he had undertaken, Gandhiji left South Africa for good on July 18, 1914.

The reader would like to know the status of Indians in South Africa at present. It will have to be regretfully admitted that the

Indians in South Africa even today suffer from many disabilities and have not become free citizens there. The white population of South Africa is determined to keep the Union exclusively as white territory. They do not want coloured people including the original African population to remain there except as their slaves. As a matter of fact, so far as it lies in their power, they want to get rid of the coloured population altogether. They are carrying on the policy of apartheid. India and other Asian and African countries have severed all relations with South Africa.

How is one then to assess the result of the new method of satyagraha for the redress of group wrongs and injustice? Writing years after, Gandhiji says: "When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the Satyagraha struggle and the present condition of the Indians in South Africa, one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing, or is inclined to question the efficacy of Satyagraha as a solvent of the problems of mankind." But his answer is: "There is a law of nature that a thing can be retained by the same means by which it has been acquired. A thing acquired by violence can be retained by violence alone, while one acquired by truth can be retained only by truth. The Indians in South Africa, therefore, can ensure their safety today if they can wield the weapon of Satyagraha. There are no such miraculous properties in Satyagraha, that a thing acquired by truth could be retained even when truth was given up. It would not be desirable even if it was possible. If therefore the position of Indians in South Africa has now suffered deterioration, that argues the absence of Satyagrahis among them."

This reply seems to have satisfied Gandhiji. One wonders how many people would be satisfied by it. One thing is certain that people cannot take their rights and liberties for granted. They cannot be secured by one generation and enjoyed by all the succeeding generations. As much of sacrifice and suffering is required in retaining one's rights and liberties as is required in achieving them. It has therefore been rightfully said that 'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty'.

In writing about the satyagraha movement, I have given copious quotations from Gandhiji's book on the subject, *Satyagraha in South Africa*. This I have done because I believe that the

ideas underlying satyagraha and the techniques it employs were evolved and worked in the South African struggle. To me it appears that in after years what Gandhiji did was to elaborate these principles and to apply the techniques on a much wider scale and for more fundamental social change. It is also gratifying to know that many of those techniques are being followed now by different people in various lands. Even those who do not believe in the basic principles of satyagraha sometimes take recourse to Gandhiji's techniques of fight. For instance, the Communist Party in India uses these techniques including that of fasting for righting the wrongs for which they feel they have no other remedy. Even those who today indulge in violence to redress real or imaginary wrongs declare themselves satyagrahis and say that they are fighting a satyagraha struggle. However, we believe that Gandhiji's techniques can work best when employed by those who believe in the fundamentals of his morality of truth, non-violence and purity of means.

# 3

# Champaran

BEFORE Gandhiji returned to India he went to England. He wanted to meet Gokhale who was there at the time. While he was on his way to England, the first World War broke out. When he reached London, he learned that Gokhale was in Paris, and no one could say when he would be able to return. Gandhiji did not want to go back to India without meeting him. He, therefore, decided that he would wait for Gokhale's return.

Since he was in England, and the Empire was at war with Germany, he thought of what the Indians there could do to help in the war effort. He also had to debate with himself as to what a believer in non-violence should do under such circumstances. It did not take him long to come to a decision. He felt that a satyagrahi should not turn the Empire's need to his advantage or that of his country. In the crisis which confronted the Empire at that time, his conduct and that of his countrymen should be such as befitted its citizens. He, therefore, decided to organise with the help of the Indians there an ambulance corps as he had done in South Africa. But conditions were different in England and he soon ran into difficulties with the British officers who gave training to the volunteers in the corps. Though he was still convalescing following an attack of pleurisy, he was driven to the verge of organising a 'miniature Satyagraha' against official discrimination as between Indians and Englishmen and the efforts of the British officers to break the solidarity of the Indians serving in the Volunteer Corps.

It was only the pressing demands of the War and the tact of the Under Secretary of State that saved the situation and Gandhiji dissociated himself from the ambulance corps.

Gandhiji took some time to recover from the attack of pleurisy. In the meantime he was able to meet Gokhale who had returned from France. He then left for India. He landed in Bombay on January 9, 1915 and was given a rousing reception. From there he went to Rajkot and Porbandar. From Kathiawad he proceeded to Santiniketan, arriving there on February 17. He left in a couple of days owing to Gokhale's death, and returned in March.

The inmates of the Phoenix Ashram and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa had preceded him to Santiniketan. Here they lived their own life. I was at that time a professor in a college in Muzaffarpur (Bihar). I had some connection with Santiniketan. I had put my nephew, Girdhari, for his education there. My old classmate of Fergusson College, Kaka Kalelkar, then known as Brahmachari Dattatreya, was on the staff. I had asked him to inform me when Gandhiji would arrive there. As soon as I was informed that Gandhiji had reached Santiniketan, I took a few days' leave and went to meet him. My desire to meet him was due to the knowledge of what he had done for the Indian residents in South Africa by his novel movement of satyagraha. It was due also to the fact that at that time India was bereft of all dynamic leadership. Political life was at a low ebb. The 1907 split at Surat had left the Congress impoverished by the withdrawal of its most active, youthful and revolutionary elements. The Congress had thereafter failed to inspire, enthuse or educate the people. It had become a body without a soul. The Government had effectively suppressed the revolutionary movement. Bepin Chandra Pal was no more the inspiration that he used to be. Lala Lajpat Rai was in America. Sri Aurobindo Ghose had retired from politics long before and had sought a quiet retreat at Pondicherry. Tilak had returned from Mandalay only a few months before after serving a long term of imprisonment there.

I reached Santiniketan late in the evening. Gandhiji, who used to finish his last meals before nightfall, was taking his food. He was sitting on a small raised platform, his unshod feet dangling on the

ground. He was dressed in a thick shirt and a plain dhoti. The shirt was unbuttoned at the neck. I was introduced. I greeted him in the old traditional Indian style with folded hands. He returned the courtesy with a broad welcoming smile. He invited me to sit by him and straightaway entered into conversation. The talk on both sides was personal. There was no mention of politics at this first meeting. But from his occasional gaze at me, I thought he was trying to know me and measure me. I too on my side was doing the same. Today it may appear presumptuous for a young man to talk in terms of taking the measure of Gandhiji. But it must be remembered that in those days Gandhiji was not the Mahatma that he became afterwards. In Indian public life he was as yet an unknown quantity. True, he had fought a good fight in South Africa to vindicate the self-respect of our countrymen. He had also evolved a novel technique of political fight. But it was also known that in politics he called himself the disciple of Gokhale. Whether his new technique of satyagraha which was diametrically opposed to that of the Liberal Party of India of which Gokhale was the leader could be successfully tried in India was yet to be seen. At that time he was only Mr. Gandhi and rather an eccentric specimen of an England-returned educated Indian. Everything about him appeared queer and even quixotic. I marked the food that he was taking. It consisted entirely of nuts. But the quantities that he was consuming appeared to me rather generous. It appeared that he was eating with appetite and apparent satisfaction, for he was masticating his food well and taking a considerable time over it. He insisted upon my being his guest instead of the poet's as I had on that occasion come especially to see him. I readily consented. Having lived in several provinces I had completely shed all provincial prejudices about food. The plain, unspiced and unseasoned food of Gandhiji's establishment at Santiniketan did not, therefore, frighten me.

This was my first interview with Gandhiji. After that I met him every day, for about a week, till he left for Calcutta. But what a week! If it had been merely a week of political talks, it might not have meant much to me. But in this week I was privileged to see his reforming zeal and organising capacity at work. He seemed to have taken the land of the lotus-eaters, as Santiniketan has often

been called, by storm. He tried to reform the poet's establishment. He particularly paid attention to the quality of food prepared in the kitchen and the way it was cooked and served. He was also unfavourably impressed with the general hygiene of the place. He had talks with the teachers and the senior students about reform. He suggested that the best way to improve the conditions was for the students and the teachers to do the work of the establishment, co-operatively. He soon created great enthusiasm for the reform he had suggested. Though the cooks were not dismissed, the teachers and the pupils worked in the kitchen and looked after the cleanliness of the Ashram. The poet was silently witnessing the innovations, but with a smile. It appeared to me that he was doubtful if the reforming zeal in Santiniketan would last long. He knew the character of his people better than Gandhiji. Inside a month the experiment of self-help was abandoned. But Santiniketan would not be itself if it did not make a beautiful ceremony of the occasion of reform. Every year the day that the reforms were introduced is observed by the inmates, teachers and pupils joining together and performing all the work of cooking, cleansing, etc. I would like to record here an incident that took place at Santiniketan. One evening Gandhiji and I, after finishing our evening meal, went to meet the poet. After some time his food was brought in. The main dish consisted of 'luchis' (fried bread made of white flour). When Gandhiji saw this he remarked, "White flour is poison." The poet quietly replied, "Mr. Gandhi, it must be a slow poison." This is how the poet humorously disposed of Gandhiji's effort to improve his dietary.

It would not be out of place here to give my first impressions of Gandhiji. They are even today vivid in my memory. What struck me most was the intensity of his character. He appeared to be a man who could, if need be, stand alone, provided he was convinced that the course of action he was following was the right one. He would not be deterred by the favours of friends or the frowns of opponents. I saw that Gandhiji was rather austere and puritanic. But he was not censorious. He denied himself many things. But he did not interfere with the legitimate enjoyments of others to convince himself of his moral superiority. His non-violence was not negative. This was clear from the fact that he was friendly

and cheerful and did not lack humour. He loved the poor and tried to live like them, though he might not have visualized what it would mean to live like them in India. His love for the poor was neither intellectual nor sentimental, nor romantic. It was deep and abiding. It manifested itself in appropriate conduct and action. One could see that Gandhiji was not patronising the poor but was trying to live like them and feel one with them.

As for his political views, they appeared to me to be all wrong. He was, as I have said, under the spell of the Moderates, as the Indian Liberals were called by their opponents in those days. He had been greatly impressed by the personality of Gokhale who had become his friend. We have seen earlier that Gokhale had helped him in his work in South Africa. Gandhiji called him his political guru. This was natural. In spite of Gandhiji's new technique of political action against injustice, his attitude in those days towards the British Government in India was essentially the same as that of the Moderates. He did not go so far as some of them and think that British rule in India was a 'divine dispensation', but he was convinced, as we have already noted, that the sum total of British activities in India was for its benefit and he wanted the Indians to act as good citizens of the Empire, whatever their handicaps. This view appeared to me to be justified neither by history nor by contemporary facts. But I was not bothered about Gandhiji's views. What I was concerned about was the man's character. I clearly perceived that he was a man who was serious about his business. He would see to it that his personal conduct was in keeping with what he kept before others. This had not been so with the political leaders in India. To give only one example. While they preached swadeshi, they would themselves be dressed in foreign clothes. Therefore, in spite of what I thought of his political views and his estimate of public men, I had no hesitation in telling him, before I finally took leave of him on this occasion, that if he undertook some piece of serious work in India and if he thought my services could be of any use, he could count on me, as I was free from financial or other commitments. I also told him that if he started a civil disobedience movement in India, he would not get his recruits from the followers of Gokhale but from those of Tilak.

Gandhiji ultimately took his people from Santiniketan to

Ahmedabad. In a few months' time, he got a big plot of land at Sabarmati where he established his Satyagraha Ashram. The inmates of the Ashram lived a simple life devoted to public service. Gandhiji had not forgotten me. He sent me the prospectus of the Ashram with an accompanying letter, asking for my opinion and suggestions. The Ashram prospectus made me revise my estimate of Gandhiji. I thought that like the religious reformers of old, he was concerned with saving the souls of a few exceptional individuals rather than reforming the lives of average men and women living in India. His kingdom, like that of old prophets, was not of this world but of the other. I read the prospectus carefully but could see no light. For instance, it said that if a man used superfluous buttons on his shirt or coat he would be "stealing". In married life the couple must live as brother and sister. Though I was not married then, I used more buttons on my shirt and coat than were absolutely necessary. I threw the book in irritation on my table. I thought that if a person was so hopelessly unrealistic, it was no use making any suggestions to him. He might establish his Ashram in the Himalayas rather than in Ahmedabad, the city of millowners. Thus I dismissed Gandhiji from my thoughts. But subsequent events proved that he was not one to be so easily dismissed.

Gandhiji had been advised by Gokhale not to take part in politics till he had been in India for a year and studied the political situation. He was, therefore, constantly on the move. As soon as the year of observance of political silence in India, enjoined upon him by Gokhale, was over in February 1916, Gandhiji got an opportunity to express his views and ideas on several matters of public importance. The occasion was the laying of the foundation of the Banaras Hindu University by the Viceroy, Hardinge. Malaviyaji had invited for the occasion many of the rulers of the Indian States. He had also invited Gandhiji to be present and to speak. Mrs. Annie Besant had also been invited to participate in the function. After the foundation ceremony was over and the Viceroy had departed, the meeting that followed was presided over by the Raja of Darbhanga. When Gandhiji was called upon to speak, he deplored the fact that the proceedings were conducted entirely in English. He said that the genius of the people could

have no scope, if the students had to spend several formative years of their life in learning a foreign tongue. He drew the attention of the audience to the fact that the approach to the main temple of the Lord of Universe, Vishwanath, was through narrow and filthy lanes. The people had got so used to it that they felt no offence at this.

The princely audience got restive when Gandhiji pointed out: "His Highness the Maharaja who presided yesterday over our deliberations spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery, which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen, 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourself of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.'... Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, I become jealous at once and say, 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.' "* He further pointed out that because of the visit of the Viceroy, Banaras presented the spectacle of a besieged city. Everywhere policemen had been stationed for the safety of the Viceroy who, though a ruler, lived in constant fear. The climax came when Gandhiji made a reference to the activities of the violent revolutionaries. He praised their patriotism but condemned their methods. He added, "I have been told, '....had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the partition movement.' " At this stage Mrs. Besant cried out, "Please stop it." However, Gandhiji continued, "This is what I said in Bengal when Mr. Lyon presided at the meeting. I think what I am saying is necessary." At this stage Mrs. Besant and the president of the meeting and several ruling princes walked out of the meeting with whatever dignity they could command. About this episode Gandhiji afterwards remarked to a friend: "I have seen audiences going away from boredom; I have seen speakers made to sit down; but I have never seen the president himself abandon the

*Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. I, p. 223, Times of India Press, Bombay.

meeting."* In the night the Police Commissioner wrote out an order for Gandhiji to leave Banaras at once. He was, however, dissuaded by Malaviyaji not to serve the order. Gandhiji, however, left the next morning.

The pity is that after more than fifty years and after these twenty-two years of independence, the conditions that Gandhiji described remain the same. The narrow lanes leading to Vishwanath Temple are as dirty as before. Violence, if anything, is greatly on the increase, as also the display of their wealth and conspicuous consumption by those made newly rich after independence.

He attended the Congress sessions at Bombay and Lucknow in 1915 and 1916. At these sessions he played a very inconspicuous part. It was at the Lucknow session of the Congress that he moved a resolution on South Africa. Though he made a short speech, it did not fail to throw light on the mettle of the man. When he was called upon to move the resolution, he started making his speech in broken Hindustani in Lucknow, the place where the best Hindustani is spoken. The delegates wanted him to speak in English. Gandhiji was not the man to be put off so easily. He said he would give them one year's grace to learn Hindustani. Ir they failed, they would do so at their peril, for he would not speak from the Congress platform in English again.

It was at the Lucknow session that Raj Kumar Shukla, a peasant from Champaran (Bihar), met Gandhiji and acquainted him with the woes of the peasants there, caused by the tyranny and rapacity of the white indigo planters. Shukla requested Gandhiji to go to Champaran and see things for himself. He was so persistent in his request that Gandhiji at last acceded to his proposal. He, however, told him that he could not go there immediately, but when he would go to Calcutta to attend a conference in the beginning of April, and if he (Shukla) met him there, he could accompany him to Champaran. Shukla dogged his footsteps and met him at Calcutta. They both travelled to Patna. In the train Gandhiji put searching questions to him about the kind of land tenure that prevailed there and its legal implications. Shukla was unable to explain this to the satisfaction of Gandhiji. He asked Shukla if he knew of anyone who could explain the legal position as between

*Tendulkar: *Mahatma*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

the peasants and the planters. Shukla told him that he knew only one man in Patna who could do this. It was Rajendra Babu. From the station they drove to Rajendra Babu's house. Unfortunately, Rajendra Babu was not there; he had gone to Puri. His clerk would not allow the two strangers inside the house. They had no other choice but to squat in the verandah. The servants would not allow him to draw water at the same time with them lest their water be polluted. Shukla took him to a latrine inside the house, but the servants directed him to one outside. Such was the rigidity of the caste system in Bihar. Sitting there, Gandhiji remembered Mazhar-ul-Haq who had been his fellow student at the bar in London and who, he knew, was practising in Patna. He had met him in Bombay in 1915 and had extended an invitation to him to visit Patna. He sent a letter through Shukla to Mazhar-ul-Haq informing him of the plight in which he found himself. As soon as Mazhar-ul-Haq got the letter, he hurried to Rajendra Babu's place and took Gandhiji and Shukla to his palatial house. He, however, could give him no clear idea of the legal position as it existed between the planters and the kisans. He only knew that the kisans were subjected to great tyranny and hardship. Gandhiji was impatient to reach Champaran as soon as possible and finish his business and go back to Ahmedabad. Mazhar-ul-Haq informed him that the planters had their headquarters at Muzaffarpur and asked Gandhiji if he knew anybody there. Gandhiji said he knew Professor Kripalani working in the local college and straightaway sent a telegram informing me that he would be arriving by a train that reached Muzaffarpur at midnight. I saw the telegram when I returned from my club at 9 p.m. How was this distinguished guest to be received and where was I to put him up? I was the warden of a hostel attached to the college and was living in a couple of small rooms. When the students heard about my going to the station to receive Gandhiji, and when I told them who he was, they wanted to accompany me and give the distinguished guest a fitting reception in the Indian style by performing an *arati*. They ransacked neighbouring compounds for flowers and collected for the *arati* all the ingredients except the coconut. It could not be had at that time from the bazar. There was a coconut tree in the compound. It was not very high. I was a good climber

and went up the tree and took down some coconuts. This completed the requirements of the *arati*. The students accompanied me to the station. On arrival of the train, we searched for Gandhiji. He was nowhere to be found. I was the only person who knew him. The trains in North Bihar are always overcrowded. Gandhiji, it seemed, had left his compartment as soon as the train steamed in and was lost in the crowd. I must have missed him as he was travelling third class. I asked the guard if Mr. Gandhi was on the train. He said he knew nothing about it. As I had missed Gandhiji, so had he missed me. When he did not find me, he asked Shukla to enquire of the young men why they were there. He was told that they had come to receive Mr. Gandhi. He pointed out his companion. The students informed me. I met Gandhiji. He was carrying a bundle containing his papers, while his spare bedding was with Shukla. The students duly performed the *arati*. I saw that the ceremony seemed to embarrass Gandhiji, perhaps because *arati* is performed before the gods. But in India he had to get used to it. The Hindus make little distinction between the gods and their great men.

A zamindar friend was travelling by the same train. I had asked him to leave his private carriage for me to take Gandhiji to my place. As we approached the carriage, we found that the students had unhorsed the carriage. In those days, honoured leaders' carriages were pulled by their admirers. I don't think they ever protested. Gandhiji, however, did so and said that he would not enter the carriage if they pulled it. If they persisted, he would have to offer satyagraha. I told the students not to persist. The carriage was a closed one. Those inside could not see the front. We went in and Gandhiji related to me his experience in Patna at the house of Rajendra Babu. As we proceeded, I did not hear the sound of the hoofs of horses. I understood that the students had not carried out Gandhiji's instructions. We arrived at the hostel. When Gandhiji got out of the carriage, he said he had been deceived. If he had known that the students were pulling the carriage, he would have got down and walked.

I had made arrangements with my colleague Prof. Malkani to put up Gandhiji in his house. He was living in the same compound. In a two-storeyed house he occupied the upper storey.

His family was not there. The ground floor was occupied by another colleague of mine. In the morning as soon as he heard that Gandhiji was accommodated in the upper storey, he was so frightened that he immediately left the house. Malkani was nervous, as he was not willing to jeopardise his job. Afterwards when the satyagraha movement began, he resigned his post and participated in it. I told him not to bother, as I would tell the principal that Gandhiji was my guest.

When the college opened, I went to the principal and informed him that Gandhiji was my guest. He asked: "You mean to say that notorious man Gandhi of South Africa is your guest?" I said, "Yes", and added, "Why do you call him notorious? He has rendered service to the Empire for which he had been awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind medal." The principal shook his head and said that I should make other arrangements for him. I said it was not customary in India to put one's guests in a hotel. Moreover, there was no hotel in the town where I could put him up. If I went to his place, I would be his guest. Having said this, I left him to think over the enormity of my behaviour. Gandhiji in his *Autobiography* has referred to me as the principal of the college. I was only a professor. In those days it was unusual for an Indian to be a principal of a college. He also says that I was staying with Malkani. That was not so. I was living, as I have said, in the college hostel.

Gandhiji asked me if I knew anything about the Planter-Kisan problem. I said all I knew was that the tenants were very cruelly treated by the white planters. Beyond that I knew nothing. In those days such was our nationalism that we did not know what was really happening in the villages. We, the educated, lived more or less an isolated life. Our world was confined to the cities and to our fraternity of the educated. Our contact with the masses was confined to our servants and yet we talked of the poverty of the masses and were anxious to free the country from foreign yoke!

I told Gandhiji that I would send for some lawyer friends, who might be able to inform him about the land tenure in Champaran and the relations between the tenants and the planters. As soon as Gandhiji was ready, he met a couple of my lawyer friends whom I had invited to meet him. He closely cross-examined them. He then met the Secretary of the Planters' Association and asked for his

co-operation in the work he had undertaken. The Secretary told Gandhiji that he was an "outsider" and his presence in Champaran would lead to trouble. Gandhiji's reply was that he, as an Indian, did not think that he was an outsider. In any case, he would not leave before he had seen for himself the plight of the kisans. Gandhiji then met by appointment the Commissioner of the Tirhut division. Champaran is a district under the commissionership of Tirhut. Gandhiji found the Commissioner none too polite. He tried to bully Gandhiji and said that he must leave Muzaffarpur at once. His presence would foment trouble. Gandhiji told him that he was going to do nothing of that sort and he would proceed to Champaran.

The lawyer friends whom I had called came again the next day and asked him to shift to the house of one of them because, as they said, it would be more convenient if he was near them in the town. I have an idea that this arrangement was suggested by the European principal. The college was less than a kilometre from the centre of the town. Gandhiji shifted to a lawyer's house. He was in Muzaffarpur for three days. During his stay with me, the Sanskrit pandit of the college came to see him. In the course of conversation Gandhiji shocked the learned pandit by telling him that to take cow's milk was as good as taking beef. Afterwards I asked the pandit whether it was not a fact that the Vedic Aryans did take beef and that there was evidence of it in the *Upanishads*. The pandit gave no reply but only smiled. I record this because I have heard that there is a controversy going on now whether the Vedic Aryans took beef. Gandhiji, after completing his work in Muzaffarpur, asked the lawyers if some of them would accompany him to Champaran. Not knowing the local dialect, he would need them as interpreters and also for recording the statements of the tenants. Their reply was that if they were not required to break the law and go to jail, they would willingly accompany him to Champaran. Gandhiji smiled and said: "I do not expect there will be any occasion for offering satyagraha. In any event, if an occasion arose, I will not call upon you to break the law."*

*It was at the Planters' Club that Khudiram Bose in 1906 had thrown a bomb at the carriage of Mr. Kennedy, killing the innocent occupants. He had mistaken this carriage to be that of the District Magistrate, who had

As soon as Gandhiji arrived at Motihari, the district headquarters, he wanted to go into the interior to see the condition of the villages. On the way he was served with a notice to quit Champaran within 24 hours. He acknowledged the notice and sent a letter to the District Magistrate that he had no intention to leave Champaran without fulfilling the purpose for which he had come. He was thereupon summoned to appear before the District Magistrate next day. When the trial began, the public prosecutor came armed with legal authority to prove that Gandhiji had broken the law. He thought he would have to argue the case against learned lawyers. However, he and the court were not only disappointed but also taken by surprise when Gandhiji pleaded guilty to the charge. In his statement he said that he had come to Champaran "with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service....I could not render any help without studying the problem....As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst....I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded to me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

The Magistrate was in a fix. Gandhiji had upset the usual calculations of the authorities. The news of the order served on him and his refusal to comply with it, his appearance in the court and his unusual statement spread not only in Champaran but throughout the country. Peasants from the surrounding areas began to pour into the town in their thousands; they were no more afraid of the planters or the police. They wanted to know the outcome of the trial and to pay homage to this unique person, who would court imprisonment willingly and deliberately, so that their grievances might be redressed and their lot improved.

The Government in Simla had been kept informed by the local authorities of what was happening. Gandhiji also wired full details of the happenings to the Viceroy, Malaviyaji and friends in Patna.

inflicted cruel punishments on nationalist workers, when he was in charge of a district in Bengal.

World War I had not yet ended and the higher authorities did not want any serious political situation to develop anywhere in the country. When they saw the popular reaction to the arrest and trial of Gandhiji, they apprehended that the unrest might spread. Judgment was postponed, and afterwards the proceedings were dropped. Gandhiji was free to carry on his enquiry!

It would not be out of place here to describe the public enthusiasm that was created by the way Gandhiji had defied the law, made his statement and the subsequent dropping of the proceedings against him. Here for the first time was a man who had defied the might of the British Empire and was willing to court imprisonment, and suffer the hardships of jail life. Such a thing had never happened before in India. Whenever a national leader or a worker was charged with any political offence and arrested, he engaged lawyers to defend himself. We know of the trials of Lokamanya Tilak and how he defended himself. The result was as would have been, had he not defended himself.

With Gandhiji's defiance of the law, the people of Champaran felt as if their age-long chains had been broken and they were free men. Writing about this, Gandhiji in his *Autobiography* says: "Unprecedented scenes were witnessed on that day in Motihari....They [kisans] received me as though we had been age-long friends. It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants, I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth. When I come to examine my title to this realization, I find nothing but my love for the people. And this in turn is nothing but an expression of my unshakable faith in Ahimsa. That day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life and a red-letter day for the peasants and for me. According to the law, I was to be on my trial, but truly speaking Government was to be on its trial. The Commissioner only succeeded in trapping Government in the net which he had spread for me."

Gandhiji's arrest and subsequent release and the permission given to him to proceed with his enquiry gave unexpected publicity to the cause of the peasants. The planters were annoyed. They carried on a propaganda through the Anglo-Indian Press against Brajkishore Babu and other lawyers who had come to help Gandhiji in the enquiry. The situation was delicate. What had happened

was an object-lesson in civil disobedience. It had, therefore, attracted a great deal of publicity. Gandhiji did not want his work to be given a political colour through the over-enthusiastic support of the Congress or the Press. He wrote to the leading Indian papers asking them not to send their representatives to Champaran. He would himself send them brief reports of the happenings from time to time, not always for publication but for their information. For this reason he would not avail himself of Malaviyaji's offer to go there and help him. He believed that a humanitarian cause would be damaged if it received a political colouring. He also believed that "disinterested service in any sphere [of national life] would help the country politically". This shows under what discipline Gandhiji kept himself in tackling a delicate problem. As he did not like publicity, he also refrained from replying to the criticism of the planters and the Anglo-Indian Press. Only once did he reply to the planters' criticism about the mode of his dress. He wrote: "The dress that I wear in Champaran is the dress that I have always worn in India....Mr. Irwin's letter suggests that I appear before the ryots in a dress I have temporarily and specially adopted in Champaran to produce an effect. The fact is that I wear the national dress because it is the most natural and the most becoming for an Indian. I believe that our copying of the European dress is a sign of our degradation, humiliation and our weakness and that we are committing a national sin in discarding a dress which is best suited to the Indian climate and which, for its simplicity, art and cheapness, is not to be beaten on the whole of the earth....Had it not been for a false pride and equally false notions of prestige, Englishmen here would have long ago adopted the Indian costume. I may mention incidentally that I do not go about Champaran barefooted. I do avoid shoes for sacred reasons. But I find too that it is more natural and healthier to avoid them whenever possible." This indicates Gandhiji's ideas about Indian dress.

To continue our narrative it is necessary to mention here the grievances from which the peasants of Champaran suffered. To understand this, one must know the land tenure there. Like Bengal and as part of it, Bihar was under the zamindari system of land tenure. The zamindar was the practical owner of the land. He paid a fixed revenue to the Government, settled in the days of Corn-

wallis. Most of the land in Champaran belonged to the Raja of Bettiah. Some adventurous Englishmen induced the Raja to lease out his land to them for long terms of years at a low rent. They wanted to plant indigo, a very paying crop for which there was a good market in Europe. The planters let out the land to the tenants on a fixed rental with the proviso that each of them would cultivate indigo on 3/20th of the land given to him. The cultivation of this crop required hard labour. It also exhausted the soil. The indigo crop was sold at a nominal price to the planter. In addition, the tenant was obliged to work periodically on the land that was not let out by the planter. The tenants had also to pay customary dues called *abwabs* on various occasions. When a peasant died, his successor had to pay a sort of death duty. If the planter purchased a horse or an elephant, each kisan had to contribute towards its cost. If he went to the hills in summer, the tenants had to contribute to his expenses. All sorts of exactions were made on one plea or another. When working on the planter's land, the kisan received three pice as wages per day. For a cart with two bullocks and a driver he received four annas per day. The planters' men would attack and loot villages whenever they were angry with the peasants. They would break into their houses, ill-treat their women-folk and even destroy their standing crops. No Indian, whatever his status, could ride a horse or hold an umbrella in the presence of a planter. Even highly educated Indians would have to cool their heels in the compounds. No Indian would be allowed in the drawing-room of a planter. The official world could give no relief. The higher officers were all British. In addition to their sympathy with their countrymen, they knew that the planters had very great influence with members of Parliament some of whom had personal interest in the indigo trade.

However, the indigo trade had since declined owing to the invention of its synthetic variety by Germany. Yet the *tinkathia*, 3/20th cultivation system, was kept alive by the planters, the kisan being obliged to sow sugarcane or any other crop fancied by the planters.

Brajkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu joined later the batch of lawyers accompanying Gandhiji. Though the former had been present at the time of the final appearance of Gandhiji before the court,

some local lawyers also lent a helping hand, the chief among them being Gorakh Babu who played host to Gandhiji before the establishment shifted to a rented house. They began recording the evidence about the various hardships from which the kisans suffered and the tyranny and cruelty of the planters and their men. The kisans poured in from all the Champaran villages. They were eager to register their grievances. They thought that if they made statements about the tale of their woes they would somehow get relief. The lawyers were kept busy recording statements during the whole day. Before recording evidence, everyone was told that he must state the truth and not exaggerate his sufferings.

I joined Gandhiji after some fifteen days, as soon as the summer vacation of the college began. But this time the vacation was to be indefinite. The authorities had already been thinking of dispensing with my services. I wrote to Gandhiji asking him if my services were needed in Champaran. He sent the following reply :

MOTIHARI
April 17, 1917

My Dear Friend,

I read your affection in your eyes, in your expression, in your postures. May I be found worthy of all this deep love! Yes, I know you want to help. You shall have your choice. Either go to Ahmedabad and work there for the experimental school or come and work here even at the risk of imprisonment. All this if I am imprisoned. If you want me to choose for you seeing that you are here, your natural place is not to quit the place until the ryots have their freedom to breathe like men. For me now Champaran is my domicile. Every day's inquiry confirms me in my opinion that the position in many respects is worse than in Fiji.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

On receipt of his reply, I reached Motihari. I could not possibly take down the statements of the kisans who knew only their local dialect, but I made myself useful in other ways.

It would be interesting to record something of the life we lived there. Every lawyer had brought his personal attendant with him. That was the custom in Bihar. The middle-class Babu would not go anywhere without a servant. It was customary for the Bihari friends to take their evening *nashta* at about 8 p.m. They had their dinner at about 11 p.m. Soon Gandhiji induced them to dispense with their servants and cooks and have a common mess. They had to finish dinner by about 8 p.m. Gandhiji had called from the Ashram at Ahmedabad Kasturba and Mahadevbhai. When Kasturba came, she was put in charge of the common kitchen and some of us helped her. There was very little work for me to do except to look after the establishment and somehow to save Gandhiji from thousands of kisans who, when they had no statements to be recorded, came for his *darshan*. In the beginning I had also to cook my own and Gandhiji's meals. Even when I was at Muzaffarpur, I generally cooked my own food. To simplify the work of cooking I had a cooker. This I had brought with me. Gandhiji had again changed his diet. At that time he was living on boiled rice and vegetables, together with whatever fruit was available in the local market. He took no salt and used no other condiments. I had no aversion to unspiced boiled food. Only I added salt to it. In those days Gandhiji's meals cost about a couple of annas per day. Rice and vegetables were cheap in Champaran. The local fruit also cost little. He had not commenced taking milk as yet. I found that Indian fruit had little taste for Gandhiji who had got used to the South African varieties.

Soon the Government appointed a Committee of Enquiry. Gandhiji was appointed a member. The other members were planters and officials except for one local zamindar. The lawyers led the evidence before the Committee. They sometimes told Gandhiji that his cross-examination of the planter witness was not as effective as it could be. The evidence was such that through proper cross-examination the planters would be obliged to admit the enormity of their conduct. Gandhiji's reply was that he could do so, but he did not want to put them in an awkward position. He wanted their goodwill. The Chairman of the Enquiry Committee was the Chief Commissioner of Central India, which was a separate province then. The Chairman wrote

out the report. It was shown to Gandhiji. He said he could not sign such a report. The Chairman thereupon asked him to make his suggestions to the authorities. Gandhiji's suggestions were incorporated in the report. Gandhiji had not indulged in any vehement condemnation of the planters or made exaggerated demands for the kisan. The report was a sober document based on undisputed facts. It was followed by requisite legislation. The kisans of Champaran did not get any radical concessions but there was some improvement in their lot. However, in about less than a year the planters had wound up their business and gone back to their homes. *It has been my experience, living and working with Gandhiji, that what he achieved by his satyagraha appeared at the time to be small but the rest was subsequently accomplished through the combination of various circumstances. These generally favoured greater justice between man and man and group and group. It is also true that if the first small step had not been taken by Gandhiji, the other forces that brought about the final result might have remained dormant for a long time.*

The success in Champaran was an object-lesson to the whole country in the potency of satyagraha. The most helpless and timid sections of the Indian population had been roused as though by a miracle to cast off their fear and had become conscious of their self-respect as human beings. We have seen how Gandhiji, when he was working for the removal of injustice, also worked for reform in the social life of the people through self-help and mutual co-operation. It was in Champaran that Gandhiji came to be known as the 'Mahatma', the Great Soul.

While the Committee was doing its work, Gandhiji sent some of us, who were not required to arrange and lead evidence, to go and work in the villages. He was primarily concerned with the education of the villagers and their hygiene. In most villages in Champaran there were no primary schools even. In the village work we were joined by some volunteers from different parts of India. Among them was Dr. Dev, a senior member of the Servants of India Society. He was a social worker. There were Pundalik, who was working with Gangadharrao Deshpande at Belgaum, and Narharibhai from Gujarat. Kasturba and many others who were not needed for the work of the Committee also joined us in

the villages and helped in the education of the children. It was difficult to get adults to learn even the three R's. We tried to inculcate among the village people ideas of public cleanliness. This work could not last long. We were all from outside Bihar and could not stay there indefinitely. Local volunteers were not forthcoming in those days to take up the work we had begun.

It is not my purpose here to record in any detail the proceedings of the Enquiry Committee. The interested reader will refer to Rajendra Babu's book on Champaran. I only have to narrate some of the interesting incidents that happened during this period. The day I arrived at Motihari, in the evening Gandhiji was to leave for Bettiah which was our second headquarters. Dharanidhar Babu from Darbhanga was at that time the seniormost lawyer in our group. This was before Rajendra Babu and Brajkishore Babu had joined us. He approached Gandhiji and told him on his own behalf and on that of his friends that he should take me with him as I was an extremist, if not a revolutionary, in politics and might cause some embarrassment to them. Such was the fear of the foreign government in those days. It was justified on account of the indiscriminate repressive policy followed by the Government. Gandhiji smiled and put him at his ease and told him that the professor, as he called me then and ever afterwards, would accompany him.

When we had started living an ashram life and all the lawyers had sent away their personal servants, the entire work of the establishment was done by us. If any message was to be sent to the officials, we were the carriers. One evening Gandhiji had to send a letter to the District Magistrate. It was entrusted to Anugraha Babu, who afterwards became the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar. I accompanied him. The letter could not be personally delivered to the District Magistrate. It had to be left with the servants. They were sitting in a group. As we handed over the letter to one of them, he asked us if we knew English. We very modestly said, "Only a little." Another peon told his companion, "Why do you ask the question ? All of them are 'ell-bella' [LL.B's]."

Soon after my arrival, Gandhiji was called by the Superintendent of Police who, of course, was an Englishman. He told Gandhiji that the Government had put faith in his non-violence but they were not sure about his companions. Gandhiji said they were all

lawyers concerned with their profession and they had come merely to record evidence of the kisans. They had nothing to do with politics. The Superintendent of Police said, "What about Prof. Kripalani?" Gandhiji's reply was, "He is a gentleman. He knows the conditions on which I am working here and he will play the game." The Superintendent's reply to this was that he was warning Gandhiji.

I had no intention to do anything that would embarrass Gandhiji but even if I had, I would have refrained from such conduct. Gandhiji had never asked me about my political opinions. Of course, he knew that I belonged to the Tilak school of thought, but beyond that he had not asked me whether I believed in the terrorist methods of the revolutionaries or not. He took it for granted that as I had come to work with him, I would not do anything that would jeopardise the success of the mission for which he had come to Champaran. One could not even think of deceiving a leader who had such abundant faith in the goodness of human nature.

Brajkishore Babu was the seniormost lawyer helping in the enquiry. He was already in the political field. He had taken up the cases of the kisans against the planters. He was naturally considered the head of the group working with Gandhiji. But most of the work in the Enquiry Committee was done by Rajendra Babu. He had been a brilliant student throughout his college career. For a year or so, he had been in the Muzaffarpur College before I joined it. He had begun his practice in the High Court of Calcutta but as soon as Bihar was separated from Bengal and had a High Court of its own, he shifted his establishment to Patna. He was considered a rising young man who would soon be elevated to the High Court Bench. After some time the other members of our party would attend to their professional duties and come back. But Rajendra Babu rarely did this. He was of frail health as he remained throughout life. Yet Gandhiji put the greatest burden upon him. One day I asked Gandhiji why he did that, considering Rajendra Babu's health. He said he was a willing worker, more intelligent than others, and if he was putting more work on him, it was that he might grow.

Being fond of riding, I was one day riding a horse. Suddenly it got out of control. I managed to dismount and received a few

bruises. As the horse was galloping away, an old woman got frightened and fell down. She was not hurt in any way but fortunately or unfortunately the Superintendent of Police was passing that way. He saw what had happened and yet asked the police to register a case against me for rash riding. I appeared before the court and said that it was an accident in which I was myself injured and it was not a case of rash riding. This plea was not accepted by the Magistrate and he convicted me of rash riding and passed a sentence that I pay Rs. 40 as fine or in default go to jail for a fortnight. The sentence did not come as a surprise. I had consulted Gandhiji. His opinion was that this was clearly a trumped-up case. It was just to impress upon the people the might of the Government. It was decided that I should not pay the fine and go to jail. My going to jail, instead of frightening the people, infused more courage into them.

One day a student of mine brought news that a village had been attacked and looted by the men of the planters. In fear the villagers ran away, leaving their children and womenfolk. I brought the matter to the notice of Gandhiji. I have rarely seen him so upset as when he heard this. He said that if the villagers had not the courage to face the goondas non-violently and die in defence of the children and women, they should have used lathis and fought against the miscreants and not run away in fear. That was cowardice. I have seen that Gandhiji always preferred violent action to vindicate one's rights and honour to cowardly submission to tyranny and injustice. His non-violence was not passive. As he often said, it was the non-violence of the brave. It is for this reason that though he did not approve of the violence used by the national revolutionaries in India, he always praised their patriotism, love of freedom and bravery.

Between the time the statements of the kisans were being taken down and the time of enquiry, we often had some leisure. This was utilised by us in listening to Gandhiji's experiences in South Africa. He would insist on speaking in Hindi. Even the Bihari friends could not understand his Hindi. We, therefore, requested him to speak in English. He acceded to our request. His narration of events in South Africa during the satyagraha struggle was like the unfolding of a drama, sometimes comic, sometimes tragic. In

his narrative there was no trace of pride or ego. He gave us the facts with the objectivity of a story-teller as if he had not played therein the part of the pioneer and supreme leader.

This and the way he worked in Champaran turned the non-political lawyers, who had come only to record statements for him, into unswerving patriots, who afterwards joined the national movement and gave a splendid account of themselves. Brajkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu were not included among those. They had been interested in the political life of the country even before. Rajendra Babu had associated himself with the nationalists of Bengal during the Partition agitation. Brajkishore Babu had been a member of the Bihar Council.

Gandhiji and I finished our evening meal before sunset and went out for long walks, to which we were both accustomed. During those walks we had discussion about political matters. I could not appreciate his faith in the British Empire nor could I understand how the independence of the country could be achieved through non-violence. I argued that whatever might have been his experience in South Africa, it would be impossible to achieve the freedom of India through non-violence. I was a teacher of history and told him that he had legal knowledge but no knowledge of history. There is no instance in history in which a subject people have ever achieved their freedom without the use of force. I said that with all his experience of the Englishmen in their own country and in South Africa, he would find them different in India. Here they were masters of the land and the people. The British had been called the 'perfidious Albion'. They were a nation of shopkeepers, as Napoleon had rightly called them. They were concerned more with their profits than with doing justice. Their empire was built not so much on the strength of their arms as on their deceitful diplomacy and fraud. It was, however, impossible at that time to shake Gandhiji's faith in the goodness of the British. Of course, there was no question of shaking his faith in non-violence or of its possibly remedying international political injustice and cruelty. He would go on explaining his point of view from day to day. He had also another argument to advance in favour of his theory which he thought was historical. He said India was the most non-violent country in the world. This amused me. The whole of

Indian history is a series of wars, big or small. How could I believe that India was more non-violent than other countries? It was in after years when again and again I thought over what Gandhiji had said that I could understand his point of view. I saw that a superficial view of Indian history would show that India was as much involved in wars as any other country from the times of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* But a penetrating study of Indian history, especially of the people, would show that the Indians were less prone to violence than people elsewhere. I found that fighting in India for centuries was confined to one small caste—the Kshatriyas. The other three castes had nothing to do with the wars fought between kings and princes. The masses went on with their agriculture and their industry. The Kshatriya fighters, unlike the European barons, did not call their retainers to help them in war. Every village was organised more or less as a small semi-independent republic. It was self-sufficient in all essentials of life including education. Some of the great pandits lived in the villages. Before the British destroyed village economy and life, the villagers did not get their manufactured articles from the cities. Rather, the cities got from the villages what the villagers could not use or consume themselves. The villages paid taxes to their panchayats or to whatever authority that was in power at the time. The kings and princes fighting one another needed food and other articles of use for their armies. Therefore generally they did not disturb village life and economy. The village life was disturbed only when the country was in utter confusion, as it happened when the Mughal empire disintegrated and the British had not subjugated the whole country. It is difficult to think of a Vaishya merchant becoming a soldier. The Brahmins also did not engage in war except when as ministers they usurped power. This happened in the case of the Peshwas. Even under great stress when the Hindus had to fight against the religious domination of the Muslims, they threw up some caste or community of fighters. In Maharashtra the two classes that built the Maratha Empire were the Marathas and the Mavlas. The rest of the population did not engage in war, nor were they called upon to do so. Again when in the North there was revolt against the Mughal Empire, the Hindu community threw up a class of fighters. They were the

Sikhs from whom afterwards the British snatched the kingdom of the Punjab. Further, there is a big religious group scattered throughout India which believes that non-violence is the greatest virtue. This is the Jain community. It eschews violence in all forms. The Jains and the average Hindus generally shrink from bloodshed. It is for this reason that we have the current phrase 'the mild Hindu'. Also, nowhere in the world are there more vegetarians than in India. There are people who would not sit at the same table with non-vegetarians. The Hindus also consider non-violence as the greatest virtue, *ahimsa paramo dharmah.* Nowhere in the world would a cultivator allow his crops to be destroyed by monkeys and birds. Nowhere will people feed ants with sugar in the morning. An Indian parent would not encourage his children to shed eggs from birds' nests. In many other ways the average Indian respects life in every form. There are places where no animal is shot or killed or fish caught for food. This, however, does not mean that the average Hindu is free from other forms of cruelty. Only he shrinks from shedding blood which becomes the profession of the soldier.

Not only did I re-read Indian history but also I reviewed human history from the point of view of non-violence. I found that as people advanced in culture and civilisation, their institutions became progressively non-violent. I examined the evolution of the civil and the criminal law. There I found that increasingly violence was diminishing. The same was the case with every other social institution. Slavery has almost been abolished everywhere. Subordinates and servants are treated with greater consideration than before. Women have been progressively achieving equality with men. Children are treated with greater care and consideration. In the educational field, it is no more held, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Rather it is held that the rod creates psychological imbalance in the child. Nations are getting their freedom not entirely through the use of arms but because public opinion in the world today does not countenance imperialism of any variety. Further, there are many fields in which the nations of the world co-operate with one another, for instance, in the field of communication and acquisition of knowledge. It would thus appear that as people advance in culture and civilisation, violence also diminishes

progressively in all spheres of life. However, there is one field in which it would appear that there is more cruelty than before. This is in the field of war. But this is due not to the fact that people are less sensitive to cruelty but because of the modern instruments of war like nuclear weapons and poisonous germs. Yet every effort is made to see that these weapons are not used and not even produced. In war too there are certain institutions like the International Red Cross which try to mitigate its cruelty.

I also found that nations, so far as their professions are concerned, want the elimination of violence and war in international relations and try to resort to peaceful methods to resolve their differences. It is with this view that the League of Nations was established and today we have the United Nations Organization. However advanced a man may be in intellect, if he is violent he is not considered as cultured. Whatever may be the accomplishments of a nation, it is not considered civilised or cultured if it uses more cruel forms of violence than those that are allowed by international convention. Germany was ahead of many other nations in almost every field of accomplishment, yet because it used more cruel methods of warfare it was called barbarian. I also found that violence beyond what is conventional is considered in the West unchristian conduct. No Christian would consider himself more civilised and cultured than the Carpenter of Galilee. No Buddhist or Jain would consider himself more civilised than the Buddha or Mahavira. This in spite of the fact that these prophets and reformers were not as advanced in knowledge, science and technology as today's average people.

However, what I have been able to achieve is only an intellectual belief. As in the case of one's physical stature, so also in the case of moral stature, one cannot forcibly add an inch. It must take its own time to grow. I do not think that my evolution has been such that I came up to the requirements of Gandhiji, who wanted people to be non-violent in thought, word and deed. When in 1927 I resigned my post of Principal of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhiji reconstituted the executive body of the institution. He wanted every member of the executive to sign the pledge that he would be non-violent in thought, word and deed. I declined to sign it on the ground that my moral evolution did not justify my signing of the pledge.

4

# With Workers and Peasants

BEFORE he left Bihar, Gandhiji was keen to put on a firm and solid foundation the constructive work that he had taken up in Champaran. Even as we were winding up the work of the enquiry in Champaran, Gandhiji received urgent appeals from the peasants of Kheda district in Gujarat and the mill labourers of Ahmedabad to lead them in their struggle for the redress of their grievances. Gandhiji went to Ahmedabad and found that the demands of the millhands were just. The owners of the mills were men who were known to Gandhiji and who respected him and appreciated his work. He suggested to both the parties that they might submit their dispute to arbitration. When the millowners declined to accept his suggestion, he had no alternative but to advise the labourers to go on a peaceful strike. His ability to instil courage in people and train them for non-violent action was again at work here. The mill labourers had taken a solemn pledge to continue the strike till a satisfactory settlement was arrived at. But as days passed, they showed signs of weakening. Gandhiji undertook a fast. This, though it strengthened the millhands, was considered by the millowners as coercive. However, public opinion prevailed. A compromise was reached and the demands of the workers were referred to arbitration.

It was on this occasion that Gandhiji formulated his ideas about labour-owner relationship. He considered them as partners, working for the public good. He considered millowners as trustees.

Any quarrel between them, he held, must be settled through arbitration mutually agreed upon. He also laid down the functions of trade unions. His conception of the work of trade unions was that they were not merely to agitate for their rights and organise strikes. The members had also to work for their own social advancement and that of the members of their families. For the purpose he placed before them schemes of constructive work, such as the organisation of creches, day schools for the education of their children and night classes for the adults, prohibition, etc. In this work he was helped by Shankarlal Banker and Anasuyabehn, the sister of a leading millowner Ambalal Sarabhai. For years, they worked to build the Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Union. It came to be the strongest union in the country. This has resulted in good relations between the textile workers and the millowners of Ahmedabad.

Kheda was another milestone in satyagraha. The crops there had failed, resulting in famine conditions. But the Government insisted on collecting land revenue. The representations of the peasants to suspend collection went unheeded. Gandhiji considered the peasants' demand as just. They could not possibly sell their belongings to pay revenue. That would mean their ruin. It was the Government's duty to relieve their distress. He asked the peasants to refuse payment of the revenue and bear the consequences. The *patidars* responded to Gandhiji's call. They took the pledge he had prescribed and organised the 'no rent' campaign. The movement was conducted among others by Vallabhbhai, Shankarlal, Anasuyabehn and Yajnik. The unity of the peasants and their spirit of sacrifice soon triumphed. The Government was obliged to yield. Gandhiji advised the peasants, who could afford to pay, to do so. This they did.

Meanwhile, World War I had entered a critical phase. The Viceroy, Chelmsford, decided to call a conference of national leaders and seek their support for the war effort. Gandhiji was one of the invitees. He reached Delhi but he was not quite sure whether he should attend the conference. Andrews had told him of rumours that Britain had signed a secret treaty with Italy for the dismemberment of Turkey and suggested that it would not be 'moral' for Gandhiji to participate in the conference. Gandhiji

himself had doubts about attending it, as leaders like Tilak had not been invited and the Ali brothers, who had been interned in connection with the Khilafat, had not been released and called to it. He had written to the Viceroy about these omissions. The Viceroy thereupon asked Gandhiji to meet him to discuss these matters with him. Gandhiji met him. He then decided to attend the conference. At the conference, at the Viceroy's suggestion, Gandhiji supported the resolution on recruitment in one sentence. He spoke in Hindi. This was the first time that any Indian had spoken at a Viceregal conference in the national language. Before leaving Delhi, however, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy explaining why he had attended the conference and again expressed his regret at the exclusion of leaders like Tilak and the Ali brothers. He reiterated the minimum political demand of the Indian people for dominion status and asked for a speedy settlement of the Khilafat question.

On reaching Gujarat, Gandhiji started a recruitment campaign. Many of his close associates found it difficult to share his enthusiasm. I was among them. Gandhiji had to walk long distances from village to village in the heat of the day, advising people, who were not war resisters, to join the army. The response was disappointing. The only result of his efforts was that he fell seriously ill. His refusal to take any medicine or even the nourishment that the doctors prescribed led to further deterioration in his health. It looked as though there was danger to his life. It took several weeks for him to turn the corner, and many months before he regained normal health.

# 5

# Jallianwala Bagh and After

IT was during these days that the World War ended. The Allies were victorious. However, there was no evidence of any change in Britain's attitude towards India. In fact, it looked as though with the end of their preoccupation with the war, they had decided to turn their attention to the danger of an awakened India. The Defence of India Act was still on the statute book. Even then the Rowlatt Committee was appointed to enquire into the nature of Indian unrest and suggest measures to meet its threat to the Empire. The Committee submitted its report. It recommended that the harsh and repressive provisions of the war-time Defence of India Act be retained permanently on the statute book. This gave a great shock to the country. Gandhiji was still convalescing. But when he heard of the recommendations and of the proposed bills based on them, he had no doubt in his mind that the bills should be resisted and prevented from becoming law. He convened a meeting of his associates at his Ashram. Among those who attended it were Vallabhbhai, Sarojini and Shankarlal. A satyagraha pledge was drafted and it was decided to set up a Satyagraha Sabha to conduct the struggle against the black bills. Gandhiji was made the president of the Sabha.

The Rowlatt Bills were introduced in the Central Assembly in the face of the country's opposition and the private and public appeals which Gandhiji addressed to the Viceroy.

At this time Gandhiji received an invitation to go to Madras

and attend a meeting that had been convened there to discuss measures to prevent the passing of the bills. He was still convalescing but he went to Madras. The country had been outraged by the determination of the Government to go ahead with the legislation. Instinctively people expected Gandhiji to show the way of resisting these bills. He had not yet decided upon the programme that he would place before the country. Nor was he sure of the response that he would get to his call for action. He has narrated in his *Autobiography* how he had to proceed. He writes: "That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual. I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me—it was as if in a dream." He thought of appealing to people all over the country to observe a day of prayer and fasting and stoppage of work to protest against the bills and to purify themselves for the struggle that lay ahead. He placed his ideas before the country. They were generally welcomed. It was decided to appeal to the people to observe March 30, 1919, a date later postponed to April 6, as the day when all business was to be suspended and people were to fast and pray.

After issuing this appeal to the country from Madras, Gandhiji went on a brief tour of South India and returned to Bombay on April 4. Delhi, not knowing the change of date, had observed the hartal on March 30. The hartal was an unprecedented success. Life in Delhi was paralysed. The Government was in a rage. Nothing like this had happened before in India. It therefore resorted to the use of force, dispersing peaceful processions with brutal lathi charges and firing. This was the beginning of a reign of terror in Delhi and elsewhere. When April 6 arrived, the country saw an unprecedented spectacle. Every town and village in the country responded to Gandhiji's call. Peaceful demonstrations, processions and meetings were held everywhere. The authorities were startled by this spontaneous demonstration of the nation to resist the imposition of the hated legislation. This was revolt. They were, therefore, determined to crush the movement by letting loose a reign of terror.

Hearing of the firing and repression in Delhi and the Punjab and in response to an urgent summons from Swami Shraddhanand,

Gandhiji started for Delhi the day after the hartal. When his train reached Mathura, he was served with an order not to proceed to Delhi. But he continued his journey and was arrested at Palwal and taken back to Bombay. He was set free as soon as he reached there. But events were moving fast. Harrowing reports of the wanton violence that the Government was using on peaceful demonstrators were pouring in from all parts of the country, more especially from the Punjab. The repression evoked further demonstrations. In some places these took a violent turn. Some British and Indian officers were killed. There were reports of rioting in Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat and in the Punjab. Gandhiji rushed to Ahmedabad. When he learned that his followers, who had pledged themselves to non-violence, had yielded to the provocation given by the authorities, he was greatly distressed. Satyagraha required strict adherence to non-violence even under the severest provocation. Gandhiji felt that people had not grasped the full meaning of his message. They were not yet ready to use the new weapon of non-violence. He, therefore, called off the movement and admitted that he had made "a Himalayan miscalculation" inasmuch as he had overrated the patience of the people and their capacity for disciplined action.

But the suspension of the satyagraha did not put an end to the campaign of repression. At Amritsar on April 10, 1919 Dr. Saifudin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, popular leaders of the Punjab, were invited by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar to his bungalow. They were arrested inside the bungalow and spirited away to an unknown destination. A procession was organised and was proceeding to the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to enquire as to what had happened to the two leaders. Troops opened fire on the peaceful procession on the way which resulted in the death of several persons and injuries to many others. The people carrying the dead and the wounded fell back. Infuriated by this, a section of the crowd lost control and killed five Englishmen in their offices and burnt some banks and public buildings.

Parts of the Punjab were put under Martial Law. The most shocking tragedy of the struggle was enacted on April 13, the Vaisakhi day, the Hindu New Year in the North. A huge public meeting was held in Amritsar at a place called Jallianwala

Bagh. Nearly 20,000 men, women and children had collected in a square, walled in on all sides by multi-storeyed houses. It had only one narrow entrance. A posse of troops, led by General Dyer, stationed themselves at the head of this entrance. The soldiers opened fire on the unarmed and peaceful crowd. There was no way of escape for the people. About 1600 rounds were fired and the firing ceased only when the ammunition was exhausted. Hundreds of peaceful citizens, including women and children, were massacred. Hundreds more were injured and left to die without medical attendance or even water.

Martial Law was imposed on the whole of the Punjab. What followed was a reign of terror. All leaders of the people, whether in political life or not, were arrested and thrown into prison. Every effort was made to humiliate the people. In one street in Amritsar, they were compelled at the point of the bayonet to crawl on their bellies. There was strict censorship of the Press. No reports of the happenings were allowed to go out of the province. But as days passed, rumours about the diabolical doings of the authorities spread throughout the country. Gandhiji asked for permission from the Viceroy to proceed to the Punjab. This was refused. Every time Gandhiji asked for it, the Viceroy said, "Not yet." It was only after six months that Gandhiji was allowed to go to the Punjab. When he reached there, he found that what had actually happened was far worse than the rumours had suggested. As the real facts became known, a great wave of anger and resentment swept over the country. Rabindranath Tagore condemned the barbarous and outrageous ways of the Government and renounced his knighthood. A few days after the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, the All India Congress Committee met. It demanded an immediate enquiry into the outrages committed in the Punjab. The A.I.C.C. met again at Allahabad in June 1919, and reiterated its demand. It appointed a committee to conduct an enquiry and to suggest necessary proceedings in India and England against the perpetrators of the atrocities. At this time the Government announced the appointment of a committee, presided over by Lord Hunter, to enquire into the disorders in the Punjab. They introduced a bill to indemnify all officers who were involved in the crimes committed.

Earlier, the Congress Enquiry Committee had proceeded to the

Punjab. Gandhiji joined it in October. I was with Gandhiji on this visit. For the second time I saw a miracle. The first, as I have related, was in Champaran. In the Punjab too, Gandhiji's presence instilled courage among the people. Where tall and hefty Punjabis had been forced to crawl on the belly, urchins in the streets fearlessly raised the slogan : "The British Government is satanic and it is our national *dharma* to remove it." The whole of the Punjab was electrified. Gandhiji and the Congress Enquiry Committee laid down certain conditions which they considered essential to ensure impartiality of the enquiry that the official committee had been asked to undertake. These were :

1. The enquiry into the regime of Michael O'Dwyer in the Punjab, with special reference to the method of recruitment to the Indian Army and Labour Corps during the war, the raising of the war loans and the administration of Martial Law.
2. Cancellation of the orders against return of Mr. B. G. Horniman, Editor, *The Bombay Chronicle*, who had been deported.
3. The suspension of the "execution of all sentences passed under Martial Law, pending proposed enquiry".

When the Government rejected these terms, the Congress Committee decided that it would not lead evidence before the Hunter Committee but would conduct a full-fledged enquiry on its own. The Committee had Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Fazlul Haq, Abbas Tyabji and Gandhiji as members and K. Santanam as secretary. After the enquiry was over, the drafting of the report of the Committee was left to Gandhiji. The report was submitted to the Congress in 1920.

The Congress Enquiry Committee on the Punjab atrocities declared that the following measures were necessary for redressing the wrong done to the people, for the purification of the administration and for preventing a repetition in future of official lawlessness:

(a) Repeal of the Rowlatt Act;
(b) Relieving Michael O'Dwyer of any responsible office under the Crown;
(c) Relieving General Dyer, Col. Johnson, Col. O'Brien, Bosworth Smith, Sri Ram Sud and Malik Sahib Khan, of any position of responsibility under the Crown;

(d) Local inquiry into corrupt practices of some minor officials, and their dismissal on proof of their guilt;
(e) Recall of the Viceroy;
(f) Refund of the fines collected from people who were convicted by the Special Tribunals and Summary Courts; remission of all indemnity imposed on the cities affected; refund thereof where it had already been collected; and removal of punitive police.

Further, it was the deliberate opinion of the Congress Committee that Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer, Col. Johnson, Col. O'Brien, Bosworth Smith, Sri Ram Sud and Malik Sahib Khan had been guilty of such illegalities that they deserved to be *impeached* but the Committee purposely refrained from advising any such course, because they believed that India could only gain by waiving the right. Future purity would be sufficiently guaranteed by the dismissal of the officials concerned.

The Committee believed that Col. MacRae and Capt. Doveton had failed equally with Col. O'Brien and others to carry out their trust, but they had purposely refrained from advising any public action against them, as, unlike the others mentioned, these two officers were inexperienced and their brutality was not so studied and calculated as that of the experienced officers.

With the end of the war began the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. The Sultan was to be deposed. This for the Muslims meant the abolition of the Caliphate. The Sultan was considered both the religious and temporal head of all the Muslims. The Muslim world had expected the British to impose such terms on Turkey as would safeguard the position of the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph. His fate and that of Turkey agitated the Muslims in India. They looked upon it as the betrayal of the Muslims by the British. The Muslim leaders in India, including Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. M. A. Ansari, decided to convene a joint conference of Muslims and Hindus to consider the steps to be taken to right the wrong done to the Muslims by the abolition of the Caliphate. Swami Shraddhanand was associated with the conference. The conference to devise the course to be taken on the Khilafat issue met in Delhi. Gandhiji who had been invited took a leading part in the deliberations. His advice was sought on the steps to be taken to redress the wrong

done to the Muslims. He told the conference that total and non-violent non-co-operation with the Government was the only effective weapon that could help them to secure justice. This provoked a debate whether the adoption of non-violence would not be in conflict with the injunctions of the Holy Koran which sanctioned the use of violence in a righteous cause. Gandhiji, however, succeeded in convincing the Maulvis that it would not be against the injunctions of the Koran, if non-violence was adopted as a policy and not as a creed. The conference enthusiastically supported Gandhiji's proposal.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress met at Amritsar under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru. This was the first meeting after the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh. The Congress had not only to consider the report of its Enquiry Committee on the Punjab tragedy but had also to discuss the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms scheme announced by the authorities. The report on the Jallianwala Bagh was approved. There was, however, difference of opinion on the attitude that the Congress should adopt towards the Reforms. Das and Tilak wanted the Reforms to be rejected as unsatisfactory and disappointing. Pandit Malaviya and Gandhiji wanted to work them on the basis of responsive co-operation. It appeared as though a conflict was unavoidable. However, a compromise resolution reiterating the demand for complete self-determination was adopted. It expressed disappointment at what had been granted and hoped that the scheme announced would be worked to secure an early establishment of full responsible government. It was at this session that on Gandhiji's insistence a resolution on swadeshi was adopted.

Events, however, were moving fast. The agitation for the Khilafat was gaining momentum. The leaders of the Muslim community warned the Government that its violation of its own solemn declarations had placed "undue strain on Muslim loyalty" and that not only the Muslims, but also the Hindus, wanted that the Khalifa of Islam be not dislodged from his power as the Sultan of Turkey. A Muslim delegation had already gone to England to plead the Khilafat cause. It was still there when the final terms of peace with Turkey were announced.

Lloyd George's rejoinder to the deputation led by Mahomed Ali

in London on March 17, 1920 angered the Muslims. The Prime Minister stated that while Turkey was to be allowed to exercise temporal sway over Turkish lands, she would be shorn of all her imperial possessions outside Europe that lay beyond her newly demarcated frontiers later imposed on her by the Treaty of Sevres. The terms curtailed the temporal powers of the Caliph who was the Sultan of Turkey which meant that the Sultan would cease to be the Caliph of the Islamic world. This struck at the root of the Khilafat sentiment in India. The Muslim community was shocked and it received the announcement with bitter indignation. The Khilafat Committee which had been formed earlier met in Bombay. Its leaders had consultations with Gandhiji and on his advice adopted a plan of non-violent non-co-operation as the only means left to the Muslims to right the Khilafat wrongs.

Meanwhile, the Hunter Committee's report was published and its findings exasperated the people. The report was not unanimous. The Indian members differed from the British majority on the Committee. It was clear that the Government had no shame or regret for the enormities perpetrated in the Punjab. Mr. Montagu had remarked in Parliament that General Dyer had acted according to his lights, and with a sincerity of purpose. General Dyer himself had said that he would have fired and fired if he had not run short of ammunition. In the course of his evidence before the Hunter Committee, General Dyer said in reply to questions as follows:

Hunter : When you got into Jallianwala Bagh, what did you do?

Dyer : I opened fire.

Hunter : At once?

Dyer : Immediately. I had thought over the matter and it did not take me thirty seconds to make up my mind as to what my duty was.

Rankin (a member of the Enquiry Committee) : No question of having your forces attacked entered your consideration at all ?

Dyer : No. The situation was very very serious. I had made up my mind that I would do *all men to death* if they were to continue the meeting.

Rankin asked : "Excuse me putting it in this way, General, but

was it not a form of frightfulness?" General Dyer replied: "No, it was not. It was a possible duty I had to perform. I think it was a *merciful thing*. I thought that I should *shoot well and shoot strong* so that I or anybody else should not have to shoot again. I think it is quite possible I could have *dispersed the crowd without firing*, but they would come back again and laugh and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself." (Italics are mine.)

# 6

# Call for Non-co-operation

THE country was shocked at this attitude of the authorities. The All India Congress Committee met at Banaras and decided to convene a special session of the Congress to consider the report of the Hunter Committee and the Khilafat question. Khilafat conferences were held in Allahabad, Madras and many other places. In these conferences the decision to launch progressive non-co-operation was reiterated. The scheme of non-co-operation was announced in August 1920, and thereafter Gandhiji and the Ali brothers set out on a tour of the country to explain the programme.

The special session of the Congress met in Calcutta from September 4 to 9, 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai, who had recently returned from the United States, was elected President. Most of the delegates were in favour of accepting the phased programme of non-co-operation. It was a strange spectacle to see that Gandhiji who had stood for responsive co-operation at Amritsar had become the leader of those who wanted the Congress to launch upon a policy of direct action to achieve independence. But the intervening period had been one of disillusionment. It was also a period of growing confidence among the people in their will and ability to rid the country of foreign domination. Gandhiji moved the main resolution of the session, calling upon the country "to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-co-operation", until the Khilafat wrongs were righted and swaraj established. The resolution met with severe opposition from veterans like Bepin Chandra Pal and

C. R. Das. The President too neither expressed his opinion nor favoured the resolution. But after a long and heated discussion, the Congress adopted it. The resolution contemplated a progressive scheme of non-co-operation. It asked for the surrender of titles by Indians, resignation from the nominated seats in local bodies, boycott of official functions, boycott of Government and aided educational institutions by students and boycott of law courts by lawyers and litigants. The Reformed Councils were also to be boycotted. Further, people were asked to boycott foreign goods and actively promote swadeshi.

The resolution, among other things, stated:

> "In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Musalmans of India and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, it is the duty of every non-Muslim Indian to assist his Musalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him; and in view of the fact that, in the matter of the events of April 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them, and have exonerated Michael O'Dwyer... this Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of these two wrongs, and that the only effectual means...is the establishment of swaraj."

This opened a new chapter in the history of the Congress and the nation. The days of 'prayer, petition and protest' were over. The people looked forward eagerly to positive and fearless collective direct action against the foreign Government. Gandhiji had made it clear that non-co-operation which would begin with the boycott of Councils, law courts and educational institutions would develop into refusal to help in the civil and military administration of the country and ultimately non-payment of taxes. He also made it clear that the swaraj he visualised was not merely political independence. It would be meaningless without economic and social justice. The programme of non-co-operation must be backed up by constructive activity which, among other things, meant work for communal unity, removal of untouchability, khadi, swadeshi, village

industries, rural development, national education, prohibition and organisation of village panchayats.

Three months after the special session at Calcutta, the Congress met in its annual session at Nagpur in December 1920. These three months were utilised by Gandhiji and the Ali brothers for going round the country to familiarise the people with the programme that had been accepted at the special session. Salem Vijayaraghavachariar, the veteran leader from the South, was the President of the Nagpur session. The programme of non-co-operation and constructive work formulated at the special session was again discussed and, in spite of opposition from many leaders of the Liberal Party, including Mr. Jinnah, and fraternal delegates from the Labour Party of Britain, was finally accepted. The resolution accepting the programme was moved by C. R. Das and seconded by Lala Lajpat Rai. With this session Gandhiji emerged as the unquestioned leader of the Congress and the country. Under him, the Congress became a functioning body, working throughout the year and not merely meeting for three days in the year at Christmas time.

In pursuance of the Nagpur resolution, the Working Committee met every month at different places in the country to take stock of the situation and issue appropriate instructions. The response of the people to the new policies was not only enthusiastic but also spectacular. Thousands of students and teachers left schools and colleges. New national schools, colleges and *vidyapiths* were started in different parts of the country. Many lawyers gave up their practice and worked for the success of the new movement. Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj created a fund from which non-co-operating lawyers who needed financial assistance could get it at the rate of Rs. 100 per month. The boycott of the Councils by Congress legislators was complete. The propagation of hand-spinning and Hindustani was taken up in earnest. The successful picketing of liquor shops led many people to give up the drink habit; it also resulted in great loss of revenue to the Government.

The A. I. C. C., which met at Bezwada after the Nagpur session, decided under Gandhiji's advice to raise a fund of rupees one crore. The fund was called the Tilak Swaraj Fund. It was to be used for constructive work. It was also decided to enlist one crore of mem-

bers in the Congress and provide 20 lakhs of charkhas for those willing to work. The requisite amount of money which in those days was large was collected. Gandhiji said that if the money was not spent within the year, it would be a mark of incompetence. The rest of the programme too was more or less carried out. All this was to be done inside the year. The enthusiastic response of the people made the Government nervous and it resorted to a policy of extreme repression.

Restrictive orders were issued against the leaders. Their movements and freedom of speech were curtailed. Processions and meetings were prohibited in many places. A grim tragedy was enacted at the Nankana Saheb (Punjab) in which nearly 200 Sikhs were shot down.

The Congress gave a call and set a date for the boycott and burning of foreign cloth. There was a growing demand from the people for the launching of civil disobedience. But the A. I. C. C. decided that the time had not yet come. The visit of the Prince of Wales was imminent. The Congress called for the boycott of all functions connected with it. The All India Khilafat Conference met at Karachi and Mahomed Ali declared that it was unlawful for any Muslim to serve in the British Army or help in recruitment. The Ali brothers, Jagadguru Sankaracharya and others were prosecuted for the speeches they had made. Gandhiji asked the people to repeat what had been said by the Ali brothers. Repression increased with increase of the tempo of the movement. When the A. I. C. C. again met in November 1921 at Delhi and reviewed the situation in the country, it decided to authorise the provinces to launch civil disobedience on their own responsibility, subject to the conditions prescribed by the Congress.

The Prince of Wales arrived in India on November 17 and was greeted by a complete hartal and bonfires of foreign cloth. Wherever he went, the roads and streets were deserted. The Government retaliated by arresting all important leaders, among whom were C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai and Motilal Nehru.

When most of the leaders were in jail, the Congress met for its annual session at Ahmedabad in 1921 under the presidentship of Hakim Ajmal Khan. The atmosphere in the country was tense. A new sense of self-respect was evident everywhere. Gandhiji had

promised swaraj within a year if the programme chalked out at Nagpur was fulfilled. The year was nearly at an end. Over 20,000 civil resisters were already in jail. People were impatient and ready for any sacrifice. The main resolution of the Congress at Ahmedabad reiterated its faith in non-violent non-co-operation, described civil disobedience as the only civilised and effective substitute for an armed rebellion, asked Congressmen to prepare the masses for individual and mass civil disobedience, and appointed Gandhiji as the sole executive authority, investing him with full powers to regulate the movement. He was to nominate his successor. Neither he nor those who followed him could come to terms with the Government or alter the creed of the Congress without the sanction of the A.I.C.C.

The die had been cast. But well-meaning friends of the Congress thought that another attempt must be made to ward off a conflict. An All-Parties Conference met under the chairmanship of Sankaran Nair and tried to negotiate terms for a settlement. But the Government was in no mood for this. The Viceroy rejected the terms offered by the conference.

Meanwhile, civil disobedience by individuals was going on. Gandhiji had decided to launch mass civil disobedience under his own direct guidance in Bardoli (Gujarat). He had also given conditional consent to a no-tax campaign to be started in Guntur (Andhra). He wrote a letter to the Viceroy declaring his intention to start mass civil disobedience in Bardoli but he added that he would be prepared to postpone "aggressive civil disobedience" if certain minimum demands were met. The Government rejected his proposal and declared that it was ready to meet the challenge. As Bardoli was moving towards full-scale mass civil disobedience, reports of rioting came from Chauri Chaura (U.P.). Some demonstrators, who had been fired upon, got infuriated and chased a party of policemen in the station. The station was burnt along with the policemen. Reports had also come of violence from Bareilly (U. P.) and some parts of Madras. Gandhiji was shocked at the news. He rightly felt that this would provide an opportunity to the Government for terrorist reprisals. He called a meeting of those members of the Working Committee who were outside jail at Bardoli and decided to suspend the movement. This step was not

approved of by some prominent leaders in jail. They thought it would demoralise the country. A session of the All India Congress Committee was held in Delhi. The debate was acrimonious. A no-confidence motion against Gandhiji was moved by Dr. B. S. Moonje. The Bardoli resolution, suspending mass civil disobedience and asking the country to work the constructive programme and thus prepare for civil disobedience, was sought to be rescinded. It was, however, clear that only Moonje and some of his friends supported the idea. The Bardoli resolution was endorsed. However, it made clear that the P.C.C.'s would have the right to permit the continuance of civil disobedience by individuals under the stringent condition of non-violence.

# 7

# Trial and Imprisonment

THE withdrawal of the movement and differences in the Congress led the Government to believe that the influence of Gandhiji was on the wane and it was time for them to take action against him. He was arrested at Sabarmati on a charge of sedition, arising out of three articles he had written in *Young India*, including one under the caption "Shaking the Manes". The trial was made memorable by the mutual courtesy that the prisoner and the judge showed to each other and by the statements of Gandhiji and the observations of the judge, an Englishman. Gandhiji related how he had become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. He pleaded guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection and concluded: "I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same....I am, therefore, here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil, and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people

of this country, and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal."

In his judgment the judge observed: "Mr. Gandhi, you have made my task easy in one way by pleading guilty to the charge.... The law is no respecter of persons. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life. I have to deal with you in one character only...and I do not presume to judge or criticise you in any other character. It is my duty to judge you as a man subject to the law, who by his own admission has broken the law and committed what to an ordinary man must appear to be grave offence against the State....There are probably few people in India who do not sincerely regret that you should have made it impossible for any government to leave you at liberty. But it is so....You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak, *i. e.*, a sentence of six years in all, which I feel it my duty to pass upon you. And I should like to say in doing so, that if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I." Gandhiji thanked the judge for the privilege of being classed with Tilak, and for the courtesy that had been shown to him. The punishment awarded to Gandhiji was shockingly severe. It ill accorded with the complimentary remarks the learned judge had made about his character and the position he held in the eyes of his countrymen. Yet the judge in the best British tradition made it appear as if he were conferring on Gandhiji a great favour by associating his name with that of Tilak. It brought out in bold relief the character of the prisoner when Gandhiji, not minding the severe sentence, thanked the judge for having coupled his name with that of the great scholar-patriot.

Gandhiji had been in prison for nearly two years when he developed acute appendicitis and had to be removed to the civil hospital. Before operating on him Col. Maddock, the Civil Surgeon, told him that he could have his own doctor to operate upon him

but it must be done immediately. He was willing to operate only if Gandhiji had full confidence in him. Gandhiji replied that he had perfect confidence in him and he could proceed to perform the operation. The operation was successful; Gandhiji and Col. Maddock became good friends. After the operation there were demands from many quarters that Gandhiji should be released and the British Government decided to release him on February 5, 1924.

# 8

# "Defeated and Humbled"

DURING the period that Gandhiji was in jail, the Congress and the country had passed through two years of considerable uncertainty. There was no one among the leaders who could step into the breach and take up where Gandhiji had left and guide the country along the path of non-violent non-co-operation. Isolated satyagraha resistance was offered in many parts of the country, particularly at Borsad (Gujarat), Nagpur, in the Punjab at Guru-ka-bag and at several places in Andhra. The Congress had taken measures to strengthen the constructive programme. The A. I. C. C. met at Lucknow from June 7 to 10, 1922 and reiterated the Congress faith in the principles of non-violent non-co-operation. There were some among the leaders who were of the view that the time had come to fulfil the requirements of non-co-operation through entry into the Councils. The Committee decided to examine the question whether civil disobedience in some form or other was possible inside the legislatures, and empowered the President to appoint a committee to tour the country and report on the feelings of the people in this regard. The committee went round and was unanimous that the Congress should not immediately embark upon general mass civil disobedience, but should leave it to the P. C. C.'s to permit limited mass or individual civil disobedience. However, the committee was divided on the question of contesting the election and entering the legislatures. Hakim Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel held that the Congress should contest

the elections and carry on non-co-operation within the Councils. The other members, led by Dr. Ansari and Rajagopalachari, held that there should be no change in the decision to boycott the legislatures. They felt that it would not be possible to utilise the legislatures for the purpose of non-co-operation. The A. I. C. C. that met in Calcutta from November 20 to 24, 1922 was not able to settle the issues raised. The Congress session met at Gaya in December 1922. C. R. Das presided. The debate between those who advocated Council entry and those who opposed any change in the decision to boycott the legislatures threatened the unity of the Congress. Despite the eloquence of C. R. Das, the President of the session, and the support he received from stalwarts like Motilal and Vithalbhai, the Congress decided that the policy of non-violent non-co-operation should not be abandoned and the boycott of the legislatures should continue. This led to a split in the Congress. Those who advocated Council entry formed the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Das and Motilal.

A special session of the Congress was called at Delhi in the third week of September 1923. Maulana Azad was the President. Here the pro-changers, the Swarajists, seemed to have won their point. But the annual session at Cocanada in December 1923 under the presidentship of Mahomed Ali again endorsed the policy of non-co-operation, re-affirming the decision to boycott legislatures. The Swarajists now organised themselves into a party within the Congress. They contested the election with resounding success.

After his release, Gandhiji was faced with a difficult political situation. He was unwilling to express any views without first discussing the matter with the leaders of the Swaraj Party. In *Young India* he merely expressed the view that his faith in the old programme was unshaken. He met Motilal and Das towards the end of May 1924. Neither party could convince the other. They issued two separate statements. Gandhiji reiterated his old stand that Council entry and non-co-operation were not compatible with each other and that he believed that Das and Motilal would, after some time, through experience, come to the same conclusion. Das did not live to see the vindication of Gandhiji's stand, but Motilal had to admit the validity of the position taken by Gandhiji.

In order to achieve swaraj speedily, Gandhiji held it was necessary to make the Congress a better-knit and more efficient organisation with a disciplined cadre of workers. To this end he gave notice of certain-resolutions to be discussed at the A. I. C. C. meeting to be held in Ahmedabad in the last week of June. One of the resolutions made it obligatory for anyone elected to a Congress committee to give ten tolas of self-spun yarn in lieu of the annual fee of four annas. The other resolution sought to debar those who did not believe in the policy of boycott of courts and legislatures from holding an executive office in the Congress. These resolutions were strongly objected to by the Swarajists. Led by Motilal and Das, they walked out of the A. I. C. C. Gandhiji was deeply distressed. He felt "defeated and humbled", as he wrote in *Young India.*

# 9

# Popularising Constructive Programme

THIS split made Gandhiji realise that some leaders lacked faith in his programme of non-violent non-co-operation and that he would have to wait and educate the people. He, therefore, left the Swarajists free to follow their own programme, and directed his whole attention to the fulfilment of the constructive programme.

Soon after this, the country was shaken with the news that communal riots had broken out in several parts of India, especially in Kohat (N.-W. F. P.), where the Hindus were in a very small minority of less than 5 per cent. To bring the two communities together, Gandhiji undertook a 21-day fast in Delhi. Chastened by his fast, the prominent leaders of both the communities assured him that they would strive to bring about harmony between the communities. On September 26, 1924 a Unity Conference was held which passed a resolution appointing a National Panchayat Board for settling communal differences. The fast, however, continued its course.

On January 22, 1925 an All-Parties Conference was held in Delhi under Gandhiji's chairmanship. At this meeting a forty-man sub-committee was set up and entrusted with the task of devising ways and means to bring about unity between the two communities and the various political parties. It was also to draw up a scheme for swaraj. The sub-committee met once in February 1925, but

could not agree on any important issues. It, therefore, adjourned *sine die*, never to meet again.

Gandhiji along with some Muslim leaders wanted to go to Kohat to enquire into the communal incidents there and to bring about peace. The Government did not permit him to go there. After a few months, however, he was allowed to go. He and Shaukat Ali were asked by the Working Committee to make an enquiry and send in a report. The work did not proceed smoothly. The Muslims were willing to come out with the facts. They were, however, tutored by Shaukat Ali not to do so. The result was that Gandhiji and Shaukat Ali were unable to submit an agreed report. This was the beginning of the estrangement between Gandhiji and the Ali brothers. It had been manifest earlier at the Unity Conference. Ultimately the Ali brothers left the Congress.

That year (1924) the Congress was held at Belgaum. Gandhiji agreed to preside at C. R. Das's insistence. In a brief speech he emphasised the need for Hindu-Muslim unity and the abolition of untouchability. He also laid emphasis on constructive work, especially in connection with khadi and prohibition.

After the Belgaum session he undertook a tour to popularise the constructive programme. At the invitation of C. R. Das and the constructive workers in Bengal, he toured the province. He attended the Faridpur Provincial Conference held on May 2 under the presidentship of Das. In his presidential address he offered to the Government co-operation on certain terms. The conditions proposed were (1) general amnesty for all political prisoners, and (2) a guarantee for the establishment of swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future. Gandhiji supported the stand taken by the conference as suggested by Das. But for Gandhiji's support, there might have been a split in the conference between the followers of Das and the younger group led by Subhas. I was with Gandhiji throughout this tour. During its course we visited Santiniketan. It was always a delight to see Gandhiji and Tagore, the great sons of Mother India, together. They had differed once on the question of burning foreign cloth. But all that was a thing of the past. They met as real blood brothers. Gandhiji always respected Gurudev as his elder brother.

After the conference Gandhiji visited several districts of Bengal.

He was happy to see the progress of khadi work in the province. He had however suddenly to interrupt his tour and proceed to Calcutta on receiving the news of Das's death. In *Young India* he wrote in sorrow : "The five days of the communion with the great patriot which I had at Darjeeling brought us nearer to each other than ever before. I realised not only how great Deshbandhu was but also how good he was. India has lost a jewel but we must regain it by gaining swarajya."

In the last week of November 1925, Gandhiji went on a seven-day fast to expiate for the lapses of some members of the Sabarmati Ashram. Regarding this he said: "The public will have to neglect my fasts and cease to worry about them. They are a part of my being. I can as well do without my eyes as I can without fasts. What the eyes are for the outer world, fasts are for the inner. And much as I should like this latest fast to be the very last in my life, something within me tells me that I might have to go through many such ordeals. . . ." In connection with bringing up the boys and girls together in the schools and correcting their errors, Gandhiji said: "The basis of action is mutual love. I know that I possess the love of the boys and the girls. I know too that if the giving up of my life can make them spotless, it would be my supreme joy to give it. Therefore, I could do no less to bring the youngsters to a sense of their error."

On December 3, he started writing his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, as he called it. He wrote it in Gujarati. Mahadevbhai's English translation appeared serially in *Young India*. During the two years he took to write the story, he was touring the country. He had no notes with him except his diary. But he had such a powerful memory that he remembered every significant incident, including the names of those who had anything to do with his public life as friends or opponents. He never considered anybody as an enemy. I have not known anybody writing his life without consulting the relevant notes and documents. Introducing the series, Gandhiji wrote: "I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind if every page of it speaks only of my experiments. . . . What I want

to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years is self-realisation, to see God face to face....I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal." Gandhiji brought his autobiography up to 1920. One would have wished that he had brought it up to date. It would have been an invaluable record of contemporary events as he viewed them and of the character of many important personalities who came into contact with him and those who played an important role in the independence struggle as its protagonists or opponents.

For not bringing the autobiography up to date, he gives the explanation:

> "Since 1921 I have worked in such close association with the Congress leaders that I can hardly describe any episode in my life since then without referring to my relations with them....My principal experiments during the past seven years have all been made through the Congress. A reference to my relations with the leaders would, therefore, be unavoidable, if I set about describing my experiments further. And this I may not do, at any rate for the present, if only from a sense of propriety."

The Kanpur Congress was held in the last week of December 1925. Sarojini Naidu presided. Gandhiji hailed this as a landmark in Indian history because an Indian woman was elected to preside. He had done his best to bring women forward to work in all fields of public life. Sarojini had worked with him for the past ten years. Hailing her as president, he said, "An Indian woman will for the first time enjoy the highest honour in the gift of the nation. The unique honour will be hers this year as a matter of right."

At this session Gandhiji gave a review of his activities of the preceding five years. He added that he would be prepared to launch satyagraha immediately if he were assured that the "fire and fervour were there in the people". But as he and the other leaders felt that the fire was not there, they held that though they had full faith in civil disobedience as the most potent weapon to enforce national claims, they thought that the country was not prepared for it. Therefore, they decided to carry on other political work in the Councils. With Gandhiji's consent, Motilal was placed in charge of this work. In another resolution the Congress laid great emphasis on

constructive work. Hindustani was prescribed as the official language for the proceedings of the Congress and the A.I.C.C. Gandhiji did not take part in the debate on the political resolution. He declared that till the following December he would remain in his Ashram. Afterwards in an article in *Young India* he wrote that he was withdrawing from purely political work and would devote all his time to constructive work. During this period khadi work received a great impetus.

At the ensuing A.I.C.C. meeting in March a resolution was passed calling upon the Swarajists to withdraw from the legislatures. Led by Motilal and J.M. Sengupta, the Swarajists walked out of the Central Assembly and the State Councils. Before walking out, Motilal said that his party was not prepared to participate in the budget discussion, as their suggestion to the people of the U. K. that India should be governed according to her own wishes had remained unheeded. This decision of the Congress was not liked by the Hindu Mahasabha, which at its meeting passed a resolution in favour of remaining in the legislatures to safeguard Hindu interests. It also advocated the organisation of the Hindus and sanctioned conversion to Hinduism. Lala Lajpat Rai and Malaviyaji attended this meeting. The effect of this decision on the Khilafat Conference was unnecessarily violent. At its meeting held after three months it declared that it did not mind "sangathan" but was concerned about "shuddhi". It also at the same time justified the conversion of Hindus to Islam. Mahomed Ali went to the extent of saying that he was praying for the day when he would convert Gandhiji. The speeches and the resolutions were so highly communal that Maulana Azad refrained from participating in the deliberations. Dr. Ansari resigned from the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee.

Meanwhile, the conflict between the two groups of Swarajists continued in spite of Gandhiji's efforts to bring them together. About this he said, "It is educated India that is split up in two groups." He also said that their method was not his method, as he believed in building from below upwards while they were doing the opposite.

The year 1926 was also marked by communal riots in several places. The news of Swami Shraddhanand's assassination by a Muslim youth in Delhi shocked the whole of India, except the fanatical Muslims. The Swami in the Khilafat days was the

favourite of the Muslims. He was even allowed to speak from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid in Delhi. But it seems that the Muslim fanatics were angry with him because he did not endorse their unreasonable demands at the expense of the Hindus and the nation. Gandhiji was deeply distressed at the tragic news. Paying a tribute to his memory, he said, "He was bravery personified. He never quailed before danger. He was a warrior, and a warrior loves to die...on the battlefield."

At this time Gandhiji resumed his political work from which he had withdrawn a year before. The next session of the Congress was held at Gauhati. On his way there he visited some places in the Central Provinces and addressed meetings. In his first public meeting at Wardha he said that swaraj was possible only if the people believed at least in the threefold programme of Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and swadeshi. He said he had come to this conclusion after one year's silence and deep thought.

At the Gauhati Congress, Gandhiji did not remain a passive spectator. He took active part in the deliberations. After the session he undertook an extensive tour of India for the propagation of khadi. He started from Bengal and gradually covered Bihar, Orissa, C.P., U.P., Karnatak and parts of Maharashtra. In Bengal he laid the foundation-stone of the buildings of the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan, established in memory of C.R. Das, in the palatial house where he lived. He also visited the two premier institutions of constructive work at Sodepur near Calcutta and at Comilla.

He visited Banaras in the middle of January 1927 and attended the annual function of Gandhi Ashram, which had been started five years earlier, with a few students who left the Banaras Hindu University in 1920 along with the present writer who was a teacher there. From its modest beginning it was at the time producing khadi worth about Rs. 70,000 per year. It gave employment to a large number of villagers as spinners, weavers, washermen, dyers, printers, salesmen and organisers.* He then returned to

*This Ashram today produces khadi worth rupees 2 crores. It also deals with other products of village and cottage industries. It has to undertake not only production but also wholesale and retail sale through a number of chain stores. Its transactions in khadi and products of village industries come to about rupees 5 crores annually. For this work it engages about 4,500 organisers, 20,000 artisans and about 2,50,000 spinners, spinning being a subsidiary industry.

Bombay and resumed the rest of his tour. While in Mysore, owing to strain of this extensive tour, he rested for a while in the Nandi Hills, near Bangalore.

At this time he placed before the public the idea of a common script for the different Indian languages. This, he naturally thought, would make it comparatively easy for the people to learn the languages and enjoy the literatures of different provinces. It would help towards greater understanding among the people. During the tour, while defending khadi against the attack of the communists, who wanted equal distribution of wealth, he said: "My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realised. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution. This I seek to attain through khaddar. And since its attainment must sterilise British exploitation as its centre,* it is calculated to purify the British connection. Hence in that sense khaddar leads to swaraj."

*Import of cloth was then the largest item in the British exploitation of Indian resources.

# 10

# Simon Commission Boycott

BY October, Gandhiji had completed his tour of the South including Kerala. He had to finish its last lap hurriedly as he had to proceed to Delhi at the Viceroy's invitation. When he reached Delhi, Irwin handed him a memo announcing that a Parliamentary Commission, headed by Sir John Simon, was to come to report on the working of dyarchy in India and on future constitutional progress. Gandhiji asked the Viceroy if that was all for which he had been called from about 2000 km. away. On Irwin's reply in the affirmative, he said that a post-card could have served the purpose! The reaction of the people in general and the Congress in particular to this announcement was not only adverse but also angry. They resented the idea that an all-British team of politicians should come, look round and go home to write a report on the future destiny of India. It was decided to boycott the Commission. Just about that time *Mother India* by Katherine Mayo was published. It was generally believed that the publication of the book at that particular time was instigated by the white bureaucracy in Delhi. It depicted Indians as a cruel and barbaric people, unfit to assume political responsibility. This incensed the people. Gandhiji, however, dismissed the book with the remark that it was a "drain inspector's report".

The next Congress session was held in Madras in December 1927 under the presidentship of Dr. Ansari. A decision had to be taken about the country's attitude towards the all-white Simon

Commission. The Congress decided to boycott it and called upon the people to organise mass demonstrations and to carry on vigorous propaganda among the people against giving the Commission any co-operation. The members of the legislatures were directed not to recognise or help the Commission in any way. The boycott was to be "complete and effective".

At this session under the influence of the newly formed Independence League within the Congress, a resolution was passed declaring complete independence for India as the goal of the Congress. Among the chief organisers of this League were Srinivasa Iyengar, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal, who was also the Secretary of the Nehru Committee to frame the constitution of India.

Gandhiji criticised this resolution as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed". This led to an exchange of letters between him and Jawaharlal. I consider these letters very important. I, therefore, make no apology for giving them in full in Appendices I, II and III.

I do not want to comment on these letters but one thing I must make clear. In his letter of January 11, 1928, Jawaharlal has written: "Our khadi work is almost wholly divorced from politics and our khadi workers are developing a mentality which does not concern itself with anything outside their limited sphere of work. This may be good for the work they do, but little can be expected of them in the political field." It was not quite correct of Jawaharlal to say that khadi workers and workers in the constructive field confined themselves to their particular work and were not interested in the fight for freedom. Whenever there was a call they were the first to court imprisonment. I happened to be the Director of one of the largest khadi and village industries organisations—Gandhi Ashram. As soon as a call for satyagraha was given, we marched off to jail, not caring what happened to our khadi and other work. All our production and sale centres were confiscated, along with the goods and funds. Before the commencement of the Salt Satyagraha, even though I knew what we had to do, I approached Gandhiji to seek his advice. I told him, "We have invested rupees five lakhs in khadi and thousands of workers are getting their work and wages. All this work will be destroyed, if we join the movement." Gandhiji's reply was : "What are you

talking ? How does it matter, if all your establishments are closed and the money and goods confiscated? Do you think that after independence only five lakhs will be invested in khadi? The whole of the country will be clothed in khadi. That is my dream. This is a fight to the finish." At the time of the 'Quit India' movement our investment in khadi had increased to a crore of rupees. But we joined the movement and lost that money. It is easier to rebuild an organisation disrupted by enemy action than through internal decay.

I also know that students and teachers in the different *vidyapiths,* which were set up in the wake of the boycott of Government and Government-aided educational institutions, marched off to jail without caring what happened to their institutions and their studies. There is Gandhiji's own testimony to this.

Speaking on April 11, 1931 at the Gujarat Vidyapith after the Salt Satyagraha movement, he said: "I am delighted beyond measure to know of the part you have played in the great struggle. The Bihar Vidyapith students also distinguished themselves in like manner. When the history of the fight comes to be written, the contribution of our *vidyapiths* to the struggle will occupy a large space in it. Even the world will be proud of your glorious record."

It is sad to think that while some of our leaders could not understand the significance of the constructive programme of Gandhiji in terms of the country's freedom, this was clearly understood by the British bureaucrats. They looked with suspicion upon every reform activity of Gandhiji including such humanitarian work as that of the uplift of the untouchables and prohibition. Constructive work organisations and workers were kept under strict surveillance. As soon as satyagraha commenced, the workers were arrested, the organisations closed down and the properties confiscated. The Britishers realised that it was not their inherent strength that maintained the Indian Empire for them, but the shortcomings in our character. They agreed with Gandhiji that a reformed India would be a free India. Therefore, they suspected every activity of Gandhiji to put new life and vigour into the country both through satyagraha and through constructive work. They realised that constructive work was no less dangerous to their power than satyagraha.

# 11

# Eventful Year

THE question of drawing up a draft constitution was at that time being discussed in the country. The Working Committee was, therefore, authorised to confer with other parties and draw up a draft constitution for free India and submit it to a special convention. For this purpose, an All-Parties Conference was held in Bombay on May 19, 1928 under Dr. Ansari's chairmanship. It appointed a committee* under Motilal to go into the matter and to prepare a draft which would be considered by the principal parties at their special convention called for the purpose. In order to bring about maximum agreement among the different parties, dominion status was proposed by the committee as the basis of the Indian constitution. However, dominion status was not viewed "as a remote stage but as the next immediate step". This did not preclude any individual Congressman or even the Congress organisation from pursuing the objective of complete independence. Having laid down dominion status as the objective, the Nehru Committee next tried to deal with the problem of Hindu-Muslim dissensions which, they said, "cast their shadow over all political work". While making several concessions to the Muslims, they refused to agree to separate electorates. They believed that it violated the essential principles

*The appointment of this committee was also made necessary because Lord Birkenhead, the then Secretary of State for India, had thrown a challenge to the Indian leaders to produce an agreed constitution.

of responsible government and was not conducive to better understanding and harmony between the two communities. They wanted joint electorates with reservation of seats for the Muslims.

The Nehru Report was published on August 30. Thus was met the challenge of Lord Birkenhead. The first edition of 2,000 copies was sold within five days. Gandhiji said: "I venture to suggest that the report satisfies all reasonable aspirations and is quite capable of standing on its own merits. All that is needed to put the finishing touch to the work of the Nehru Committee is a little forbearance, a little mutual respect, a little mutual trust, a little give and take and confidence, not in our little selves but in the great nation of which each one of us is but a humble member."*

An All-Parties Convention met in Lucknow to consider the report. Gandhiji was not present, but after the conclusion of the meeting when there was general agreement, he wrote: "The most brilliant victory achieved at Lucknow, following as it does closely on the heels of Bardoli, makes a happy conjunction of events." About further work, he said, "A sanction has to be forged." "A proper sanction would be necessary if the national demand was to be enforced. Bardoli has shown the way, if the sanction has to be non-violent....."**

Much had happened during the past months. The Simon Commission had arrived in India on February 3, 1928. In pursuance of the Congress decision, hartals and black flag demonstrations were organised everywhere. Wherever the Commission went, it was greeted with the slogan 'Simon go back'. No Indian of any importance was ready to talk to them. Even their social functions were severely boycotted. Gandhiji hardly mentioned them. The great success of the boycott provoked the authorities to harsh and cruel repression. In Lahore the demonstration, led by Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders, was brutally lathi-charged. Lalaji was injured. It is believed that these injuries led to his premature death a few weeks later. Jawaharlal was, among others, the victim of a lathi charge in Lucknow. In those days Lucknow had the appearance of an armed camp. Police not only arrested and lathi-charged but indiscriminately raided private

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume II) by Tendulkar, p. 435.

** Ibid., p. 436

houses and beat up people. Similar scenes were enacted in Patna, Madras, Bombay and other places.

While the Simon Commission boycott movement was being conducted all over the country, a unique satyagraha was in progress in Bardoli (Gujarat). It began in February 1928. The Government had declared enhancement of land revenue by 25 per cent. This was done without giving an opportunity to the peasants to represent their case. The enhancement was not made on the basis of fair and rational assessment. The peasants of Bardoli, noted for their mild and peaceful nature, decided to resist this imposition and invited Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Mayor of Ahmedabad, to guide them in organising resistance. The Government decided to meet the challenge with cruel repression. The Governor of Bombay declared that "all the resources of the Empire would be used to crush the no-tax campaign". Eighty-eight thousand peasants valiantly faced the repression under the "Sardar". Hundreds were sent to jail. Their lands and movable properties were confiscated. They were driven out of their hearths and homes. Vallabhbhai Patel had the difficult task of keeping up the resistance and at the same time preventing an outbreak of violence.

The movement evoked great sympathy all over the country. Money poured in. The organisation was complete. Government's attempts to auction the confiscated lands generally failed, as there were no bidders. Movable properties could not be removed as the Sardar had asked the peasants to dismantle the carts and hide them away. No one gave the authorities any help. The police had to approach the Sardar even for their rations.

The movement continued from February to August. Questions were asked in the Legislative Assembly and in the House of Commons. On August 2, Gandhiji went to Bardoli to replace the Sardar whose immediate arrest was expected. But within four days the Government cried a halt. The prisoners were released and their properties restored. An enquiry committee was appointed and it upheld most of the claims of the peasants. Vallabhbhai Patel became the "Sardar of Bardoli". It was an epic struggle which thrilled the nation. Tagore gave it high praise. And it brought into prominence Bhulabhai who had helped in preparing the legal case against enhancement.

Lala Lajpat Rai died on November 17, 1928. His death, as we have said, was believed to be the result of the lathi charge during the Simon agitation. This incensed the people. It incited intense revolutionary feeling among the youth. Demonstrations were followed by savage lathi charges and arrests in many places. This eventful year 1928 closed with the Calcutta Congress, presided over by Motilal.

# 12

# Poorna Swaraj

THE draft of the main resolution at the Calcutta session had stated that unless dominion status was granted within two years, that is by the end of 1930, the Congress would declare complete independence as its goal. This was in accordance with the wishes of Motilal. He had made it clear that he would not preside over the Congress unless he had a majority to support the Nehru Report, which had demanded dominion status. The controversy, therefore, centred round the goal of the Congress. The younger group, which had been instrumental in passing the independence resolution at the previous session of the Congress at Madras, wanted to bring an amendment to the draft resolution on dominion status, and wanted the goal of the Congress to be declared as independence. This could have led to a split in the Congress. At Gandhiji's intervention a compromise was arrived at in the Working Committee and accepted by the leaders of the Independence League. It said that if dominion status was not established within one year, that is by the end of 1929, the Congress would declare complete independence as its goal and would take all suitable measures to enforce the demand.

This compromise resolution was moved in the Subjects Committee where the amendment, sponsored by the Independence League, was defeated by a large majority. But the leaders of the Independence League insisted upon moving their amendment in the open session. Subhas moved it and Jawaharlal seconded it.

The compromise resolution moved by Gandhiji in the open session ran thus :

"This Congress, having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and approves of the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

"Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organize a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

"Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for Complete Independence."

The amendment moved by Subhas ran thus :

"(*i*) This Congress adheres to the decision of the Madras Congress declaring Complete Independence to be the goal of the Indian people and is of opinion that there can be no true freedom till the British connection is severed.

"(*ii*) The Congress accepts the recommendations of the Nehru Committee as agreed to by the Lucknow All-Parties' Conference for the settlement of communal differences.

"(*iii*) The Congress cordially congratulates the Nehru Committee on their labours, patriotism and farsightedness, and, without prejudice to the resolution of the Congress relating to Complete Independence, is of opinion that the recommendations of the Nehru Committee are a great step towards political advance, and without committing itself to every detail, generally approves of them."

Gandhiji, speaking on the compromise resolution, asked the Congress to reject this amendment. During the course of his speech, in the sadness of his heart, he uttered these ominous words: "You may take the name of independence on your lips, as the Muslims utter the name of Allah or the pious Hindus utter the name of Krishna or Rama, but all that muttering will be an empty formula if there is no honour behind it. If you are not prepared to stand by your words, where will independence be? Independence is a thing made of sterner stuff. It is not made by the juggling of words."* Subhas's amendment was lost and the compromise resolution was passed by a great majority. Motilal, in his concluding remarks, said: "Both Subhas and Jawaharlal have told you in their speeches on the amendment to Mahatmaji's resolution that, in their opinion, we old-age men are no good, are not strong enough and are much behind the times. There is nothing new in this. It is common in this world that the young always regard aged men as behind times. I would give you one word of advice. Erase from your mind from today these two terms borrowed from a foreign language, namely, independence and dominion status, and take to the words swaraj and *azadi.* Let us work for swaraj by whatever name we might call it.... I have not the least doubt that the next Congress will see us united and taking another step forward."*

I would like to recall an incident in this Congress which would be of interest to our young leaders of today. Vallabhbhai had never been to Calcutta before. He and I took little interest in the controversies that were going on. We left all that to Gandhiji. We were sometimes absent even from the meeting of the open session. We wandered round Calcutta. On one occasion when we happened to pass by the Congress pandal Vallabhbhai said: "Let us go and see what is happening." We approached the gate leading to the dais. Unfortunately Vallabhbhai had not got his card. I argued with the volunteer but he said he knew nothing of the Sardar of Bardoli. We had to go back to our residence not particularly disappointed.

Next day a resolution was moved in the open session congratulating the Sardar on conducting his Bardoli Satyagraha to a successful end. The audience wanted to see him. He had to stand on

*Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume II) by Tendulkar, p. 441.

the dais and bow to the audience. In those days even great leaders worked without seeking publicity. There were no photographs of theirs appearing periodically in the Press.

The Muslim League, at the conference held immediately after the Congress, repudiated the Nehru Report mainly on two grounds: they wanted separate electorates and a federal structure for the Indian Constitution.

Though the Nehru Report, when it was first issued, had general support, it was assailed by the League as time passed. However, Gandhiji was not disheartened. He said: "If you (the people) will help me and follow the programme I have suggested, honestly and intelligently, I promise that swaraj will come within one year."

# 13

# Bonfire of Foreign Cloth

GANDHIJI had placed the constructive work resolution before the Calcutta session of the Congress. He now decided to devote all his time to preparing the nation for a likely struggle by the end of the year. He gave a new content to his khadi programme. He prepared a scheme for the boycott of foreign goods, by burning all foreign cloth and picketing foreign cloth shops. He also advised the Congress Committees to pass resolutions calling upon legislatures and the Government to make all their purchases in khadi and to impose prohibitive duty on foreign cloth. It was also decided that all khadi should be certified by the All India Spinners' Association and prices should follow a uniform pattern.

The Working Committee, at its meeting held in Delhi on February 15, 1929, accepted the foreign cloth boycott scheme. It appointed a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee with Gandhiji as Chairman and Motilal, Jawaharlal, Malaviya, Ansari and Azad as members. On March 4, at a foreign cloth burning demonstration held at the Shraddhanand Park, Calcutta, Gandhiji appealed to the people to give up the use of foreign cloth, as he said this would further the cause of freedom. He added, "The boycott of foreign cloth is not merely a boycott but is, in my opinion, indispensable if we are to attain swaraj in terms of the hungry millions." He called upon the audience to throw in a heap whatever foreign cloth they had brought with them for a bonfire. At this meeting he was served with a notice under the Police Act and informed that it would

be an offence to burn cloth in a public thoroughfare. According to Gandhiji there was a lacuna in the order inasmuch as a 'park' was not a 'public thoroughfare'. He told his audience that he was appearing before them that day not as a civil resister. His interpretation of the notice served on him was different from that of the Government. He had no desire to break the law. As the Chairman of the Boycott Committee, he was only fulfilling his duty. Gandhiji proceeded to light the bonfire. The police intervened, arrested him and indulged in rowdyism. However, the Government decided to defer the prosecution as Gandhiji had to proceed to Burma for a fortnight on a pre-arranged tour programme. On his return from Burma, he addressed a huge meeting at Calcutta where in response to his appeal a shower of foreign cloth fell in a heap in front of him. This huge pile was removed and burnt in some private premises. A few days later, he and his four colleagues appeared before the Chief Presidency Magistrate and were fined one rupee each. Someone paid Gandhiji's fine. Gandhiji was not pleased. His comment on this was : "Whoever had paid the fine could not be a friend." He also said: "I was unprepared for the court's justification of the conduct of the police. It was its duty to condemn the action of the police in creating a disturbance which they did in the face of my clearest possible statement that in seeking to light the bonfire, I was not acting as civil resister but in the *bona fide* belief that the section in question did not apply to places like the Shraddhanand Park. As it is, the police have received a certificate of good conduct for their rowdyism.... The high-handed action of the police gave the boycott movement an advertisement and an encouragement it would never otherwise have had."* The day of the trial was observed all over India as one for burning foreign cloth.

We have anticipated events. Gandhiji, on his return to Sabarmati after attending the session of the Calcutta Congress, found that some lapses had occurred in his Ashram. He denounced the offenders publicly through *Navajivan*. The statement received wide publicity as he chastised, among others, his wife Kasturba and called her a "thief". Some visitors to the Ashram had given her rupees four which, as an inmate of the Ashram who had taken a vow of non-possession, she should have handed over to the Ashram authorities. She

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume II) by Tendulkar, pp. 469-70.

did not do so. The Ashram authorities came to know of it and she surrendered the amount. Writing about it Gandhiji said: "She felt repentant and in all humility she gave back the money and vowed that such a thing would not be repeated. I believe hers was an honest repentance. She has taken a vow that she would leave me and the mandir, if any other lapse committed in the past is detected, or if she is caught doing the same thing again in future. The mandir has accepted her repentance. If the inmates forgive her and she stays in the mandir, she will enjoy the same honoured place as before." But he described this as an "act of shame". Having read this article, Azad observed: "There is a man whose truth not even his enemies can doubt."

# 14

# Salt Satyagraha

To prepare the country for the impending struggle Gandhiji had to undertake extensive tours. He started on February 12, 1929 with a visit to Sind. I was in his party. We were travelling as usual in the third class. It was on a metre-gauge line. When Gandhiji finished his meal, he asked me why I was not taking my food. I said I could not use the third-class latrines on that train, as they were dark and there was scarcely room to move. He did not say why I could not use them when he could. He asked me to get a second-class ticket at the next station, which I did. Gandhiji was always considerate about the requirements of others even though he denied himself many things which they considered necessary.

He addressed large public meetings in Sind exhorting the people to use swadeshi articles, and in cloth to prefer khadi and engage in the constructive programme. He urged them to burn and boycott foreign cloth. He received purses for his work wherever he went. After this tour in Sind he went to Calcutta, to which reference has already been made, and then proceeded to Burma.

During his fortnight's absence in Burma, the Government decided to act. All of a sudden, thirty-one labour leaders from Bombay, U.P., Punjab and Bengal were arrested. Some of them were communists. They were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the Government and were brought to Meerut for trial. The trial lasted four years and created widespread resentment. Gandhiji's comment was that the Government was in panic

and the arrests betrayed it. He also said: "It presages a period of terrorism." He added: "Presently it will be the turn of thousands not merely to risk but to face and court imprisonment, if this reign of lawlessness under the guise of law is to be ended once for all. It seems to me that the motive behind these prosecutions is not to kill communism, it is to strike terror....One thing is certain. Terrorism like plague has lost its terror for the public. The movement of swaraj has found too deep a root in the public mind to be shaken or destroyed. It is bound to gain strength through these arrests and other similar indications of the Government's intention to strike a death-blow at the liberty movement." There were arrests in various other places throughout India. This provoked Gandhiji to say that "the Government are by such acts providing us with easy methods of civil disobedience, should it be necessary for us next year to undertake it on a large scale."

The Government at this time brought forward the Trade Disputes Bill and the Public Safety Bill. Both were vehemently opposed in the Assembly by the nationalists. The President of the Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel, tried to rule out their consideration. The Trade Disputes Bill, however, was passed. When the Public Safety Bill was taken up for consideration on April 8, two bombs fell from the visitors' gallery near the seat of the Finance Secretary. Along with the bombs were thrown red pamphlets in the name of the "Hindustan Socialist Republican Army". Two young men, Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt, were arrested. They were sentenced to transportation for life on June 12. In a long and spirited statement at the trial they, in effect, said that they had thrown the bombs not to kill anyone but to draw the world's attention to conditions in India. They had chosen the Assembly, as here the national demand was repeatedly flouted by the Government and it had become the symbol of national humiliation.

The atmosphere in India was tense and surcharged with violence. Strikes broke out in all the major industries. There was a big general strike in the Bombay textile mills involving 150,000 workers. It demonstrated that Indian labour was developing a new outlook. It was a great success to begin with, and showed that there was considerable ability behind it. But after six months or more it failed. Another general strike took place in the jute areas in Bengal involving

about 25,000 workers. The jute workers were badly organised but they succeeded. Still another strike that attracted widespread attention was of the tin-plate workers in Golmuri near Jamshedpur which continued for eight and a half months. Sympathetic strikes took place in Budge Budge and elsewhere.

The Government launched full-scale repression. Arrests, searches and confiscation of literature were the normal practice. The editor of *The Modern Review*, Ramananda Chatterji, was arrested for publishing Dr. Sunderland's *India in Bondage*. A special law known as the Bengal Ordinance was enacted. There was recrudescence of terrorist activities in Bengal, U.P., Punjab and some other places. Jatin Das, one of the political prisoners in Lahore jail, died on September 13 after a fast lasting 61 days. The fast was undertaken to secure special classification and more humane treatment for the political prisoners who were being treated as ordinary criminals and lodged with them. Through Jatin Das's sacrifice, political prisoners belonging to what was considered a higher status in life secured their rights. However, there was no change in the condition of the bulk of the political prisoners. Jatin's death shocked the people and demonstrations were held all over the country to mourn his death.

There was a new spirit in the country. Gandhiji dropped hints of a mass struggle. On April 6, he started on his Andhra tour. This tour was remarkable for its extent, covering as it did many rural areas. Great masses of people came to hear and see Gandhiji. His car was converted into a moving platform and he addressed meetings from there, coming directly in touch with the teeming millions of his countrymen.

A meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held in Bombay on May 24, 1929 to consider Gandhiji's plan to prepare for satyagraha, if it became necessary after December 1929. It was decided that by August at least 7.5 lakh men and women should be enrolled as members on the Congress register. Gandhiji wanted that the Congress should have an office in every village. The masses must know what the Congress stood for. He emphasised the importance of recruiting women in the freedom struggle.

In June he undertook a short visit to Almora and rested there for some days. He returned in early July to Sabarmati and found

that his name was proposed for the presidentship of the Congress. The names of Vallabhbhai and Jawaharlal were also proposed. Gandhiji turned down his own nomination and supported the candidature of Jawaharlal. Vallabhbhai thereupon withdrew his name. At the A.I.C.C. meeting, held shortly after in Lucknow, the Working Committee supported Jawaharlal's name. There was some doubt about Jawaharlal's ability to shoulder this heavy responsibility, but high praise from Gandhiji and his powerful support dispelled such doubts.

In September 1929 I, as Director of the Gandhi Ashram, the premier khadi organisation in U.P., had to organise a khadi tour for Gandhiji. The tour began on September 11 from Agra. As he was in a weak state of health, he rested for a week there. Addressing the first public meeting, he said: "I am here to re-declare my faith in the potency of non-co-operation. You have all got to prepare for January 1930 from now." He said that only by giving effect to the constructive programme as announced in the A.I.C.C. resolution could the people of India prepare for the struggle for swaraj.

Gandhiji's party consisted of about a dozen people, men and women. Khorshedbehn, the grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, was with us throughout the tour. Jawaharlal joined us in many places. Arrangements in the Kumaon Hills were carefully made by Govind Ballabh Pant, the then member of the Central Assembly. I would like to record some of my experiences. The programme everywhere was crowded. If it were not strictly adhered to, we would reach the next place late by some six hours or so. I, therefore, insisted that the programme already made must be strictly followed. However, the local leaders had to satisfy the demands of their patrons who would give them donations only at their doorsteps. I would refuse to change the programme, whatever be the donation. But in spite of that the local leaders had their way. They would change the route and at a particular place the car would develop some trouble and all at once some householder with his family members would emerge with garlands, etc., and a donation. This would irritate me greatly. But Gandhiji, after receiving the donation, would humorously remark, "I am sure the car trouble must be over now." Under these circumstances, I had to try my best to

keep to the programme. When we left the place, I would be lustily cursed. But when we reached the next place, our hosts would thank me for keeping to the programme. Another difficulty was the food habits of the members of Gandhiji's party. Almost everyone had a separate diet. It must have been hard for the hosts to satisfy the various demands. With the crowds gathering for *darshan* at all odd hours, the whole household would be in confusion. The greatest burden fell upon the women who bore it all with good cheer. It was for them a devout service. The variety of demands made on the host has taught me that it is more in consonance with courtesy to the host to satisfy oneself with what he provides than to trouble him with fanciful demands. This of course does not mean that a vegetarian should not ask for vegetarian food. Whenever, therefore, a host enquires of me what I would eat, I say I would eat what the family eats. The host looks surprised to see that a 'leader' can be satisfied with ordinary everyday food. I have also seen that the special demands made on the host are usually much more costly than the ordinary diet.

The U.P. tour included almost every important place in the province. Gandhiji visited Agra, Mainpuri, Aligarh, Mathura and a large number of wayside places. In Meerut, the trial of labour and communist leaders was being conducted in the jail premises. Gandhiji paid an unexpected visit to the prisoners. He told them that if they were not free men before the end of the year, he would himself join them. By this visit, apart from his sympathy with the prisoners, he wanted to show that he considered the prosecution against them as an act of repression for which there was no justification. Also, he felt that it was atrocious that they should be tried in a place like Meerut, where expert legal help would not be available to the accused.

During the tour he was able to collect nearly Rs. 3.5 lakhs. This was considered a large amount in those days.

Our tour included Kausani (Almora). We stayed there for about a week. We were lodged in a small dak-bungalow from where a panorama of the snow-covered Himalayan peaks could be seen at all hours when the atmosphere was clear. In these calm and beautiful surroundings Gandhiji finished his commentary on

the *Gita*, "Anasaktiyoga",—discipline of unattached action. The U.P. tour ended on November 24.

The year was closing. The Viceroy, Irwin, who had gone to England returned to India on October 25 and announced that he was authorised by the British Government to state that the objective of the British policy was the attainment of dominion status by India. At the same time he announced that a Round Table Conference would be held in London to decide upon the course of future action. The Congress leaders met in Delhi to consider this announcement. They issued a statement which, while welcoming the Viceroy's announcement, declared that dominion status should be the basis of discussion at the Round Table Conference. In the meantime, so far as it was possible, the Government of India should act as a Dominion Government. They also demanded general amnesty for all political prisoners. The Government did not agree to these conditions and a blunt reply came from the Secretary to the Viceroy. The only course now left for the Congress was to proceed according to its previous declaration and to prepare for the struggle. A last-minute attempt was, however, made for a possible compromise before the meeting of the Congress session. A meeting was arranged with the Viceroy on December 23, 1929. Gandhiji, Motilal, Vithalbhai Patel, Tej Bahadur and Jinnah participated. The Viceroy clearly stated his inability to make any commitment on the dominion status question prior to the meeting of the Round Table Conference. Jinnah was opposed to the demand of the Congress. Vithalbhai too was not in full agreement with Gandhiji and Motilal. When the 1930 Satyagraha began, he however joined the national movement and resigned his presidentship of the Assembly.

The Congress session met in Lahore at the end of December 1929 in a tense atmosphere. It was a crowded gathering. Ghaffar Khan had come with a large delegation from the N.-W.F.P. The Ali brothers attended merely to warn Gandhiji that the Muslims would not participate in the contemplated civil disobedience. At the session the Congress voted for complete independence—"Poorna Swaraj"— as its goal. The members of the legislatures were asked to resign and not to respond to the invitations to attend the Round Table Conference. Gandhiji was vested with all powers to conduct the satyagraha campaign and also to determine its

form, scope and time of commencement. Through his writings and speeches he had already given indications of what he expected the people to do.

At mid-night on December 31, amidst great enthusiasm the tri-colour flag of India was hoisted on the banks of the river Ravi with music and dancing in which the youthful President participated. India was declared independent.

The atmosphere in the country was surcharged with violence and anger against the Government and their repressive policy. Gandhiji was furiously thinking about what was to be done in that atmosphere. His mental disquiet found expression in his conversation with Poet Tagore who visited Sabarmati in the beginning of January 1930. In reply to his query about the immediate future, Gandhiji said, "I am furiously thinking, I do not see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness." He said he was not sure whether he would be able to keep the struggle non-violent. He also wanted a clear and sharply defined issue which would be understood by all.

The world economic crisis was also affecting India. Farm prices had sharply fallen. Peasants were in distress. Their debts were mounting and their ability to pay land revenue diminishing. In that situation even without Gandhiji's instructions, it was quite possible for the peasants to launch a no-tax campaign. But the starting of any movement, except under his guidance, he thought, would be undesirable.

Gandhiji had to consider the entire situation before giving the order. He was getting ready, giving interviews to the Press and preparing public opinion. He published rules for the guidance of intending satyagrahis. He declared January 26 as Independence Day. It was widely celebrated throughout the country. Meetings were held everywhere, the tricolour flag hoisted and 'Poorna Swaraj' outside the British Empire was declared as the country's goal. It was further declared that it would be a sin against man and God to submit to British rule any longer. Gandhiji was greatly encouraged to see the response to the call for celebrating Independence Day. Four days later he published his 11-point demand which, in his view, would mean the substance of independence. These were: abolition of the liquor trade, revaluation of the rupee, reduction in the expenditure of the army and in the salaries of

the bureaucrats, fifty per cent reduction in land revenue, imposition of protective tariff against foreign cloth, abolition of salt tax, reservation of coastal traffic for Indian shipping, abolition of the CID, release of political prisoners and conferring on Indians the right to carry firearms. The programme had an appeal for every section of the people.

By March he was ready. He formulated his plans for the Salt Satyagraha. The obnoxious salt laws would be violated, salt would be manufactured and Government salt depots would be picketed by the satyagrahis. Even at this stage he wanted to avoid conflict, even a non-violent one. He sent a letter to Lord Irwin embodying the eleven demands.

The Viceroy treated the letter with contempt and a four-line reply was sent to Gandhiji by his Secretary. In the high Government circles of Delhi, Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha plans were viewed with ridicule as the fancy of a crank. Even the Congress leaders had some doubts whether this campaign would succeed. Motilal told this writer that he had learnt from the officials in the Salt Department that Gandhiji and his followers might manufacture salt but for three years it would make no difference to the salt revenue. However, in spite of these doubts, everybody fell in line with Gandhiji.

On March 12, with seventy-eight picked and trained members of the Ashram, Gandhiji commenced his march towards the sea. Before this march he had asked the people to wait till he reached the seashore and picked up salt. After that everybody who could should manufacture salt and defy the Government prohibition on its manufacture. Dandi on the sea-coast is at a distance of about 385 km. from Sabarmati. This army of satyagrahis had no weapons. Their martial band was a *tamboora* and their martial music was devotional. From March 12 to April 5, Gandhiji and his band of satyagrahis tramped from village to village. Wherever they went, they received an adoring welcome by the people with flags and garlands. Gandhiji addressed meetings everywhere and spoke to the crowds at his prayer gatherings, morning and evening. As he marched on, the crowd of marchers swelled. Thousands joined him. The local administration started crumbling. Nearly 400 village headmen resigned. Sarojini Naidu joined the party on the way.

As Gandhiji and his picked men marched from day to day, the tempo of the people throughout India also rose. Everywhere men and women were impatiently waiting to manufacture salt as soon as Gandhiji picked it up on the Dandi beach. The authorities who had ridiculed the movement now felt apprehensive. They decided on a policy of repression.

On April 6, early in the morning Gandhiji marched to the shore where salt lay thick, and picked up the contraband salt and held it up in his hands for all to see. He remained in that area and carried on his work till he was arrested on the midnight of May 4, 1930 and taken to Yeravda jail in Poona. His arrest was a signal for a widespread strike. The cotton mills of Bombay and the railway workshops closed down. In Sholapur the workers defied the authorities who put the region under Martial Law. They cruelly suppressed the workers shooting twenty-five men. But the movement had spread all over the country. Thousands were arrested including the leaders. Assembly members resigned. The worst repression was resorted to in Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province on the non-violent Pathans, the Khudai Khidmatgars. After Ghaffar Khan's arrest, batch after batch of non-violent satyagrahis—men, women and children—marched forward to face the shooting. They bared their chests and defied the authorities to do their worst. In Peshawar the shooting went on for hours, killing a large number of people. The Garhwal Battalion there ultimately refused to shoot at the unarmed people who were being brutally mowed down. As a consequence they had to face court martial, and many of them got ten to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The repression of the satyagrahis was intensified after Gandhiji's arrest. The satyagrahis who had marched with Gandhiji then decided to raid Dharasana, the nearby Government Salt Depot. Batch after batch of non-violent satyagrahis marched towards the Depot where armed police were waiting to greet them. They were beaten mercilessly but no one raised his hand even to ward off the blows. On the first day 320 were injured and two died. Irwin's report home of this brutal performance of his police was that the "Salt Department battle" was amusing and the injured were "shamming". He was the most Christian Viceroy India ever had !

Meanwhile, in Borsad in Gujarat, the villagers had started a

no-rent campaign on their own. The police used novel methods to suppress them. Apart from lathi charges and arrests, they started the practice of locking up the leaders in iron cages without any charge or trial. Ultimately the entire village was deserted, unable to bear such repression. In June the Congress was declared illegal. Motilal who was ailing at the time was arrested. The number of arrests, which had risen to 60,000 a month after the launching of the satyagraha, now rose to the staggering figure of 100,000.

Irwin at last realised that Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha was a grim battle and not an "amusing" interlude. His term of office was expiring. He therefore wanted, if possible, to come to terms with Gandhiji. He tried to sound him in jail through the representative of the *Daily Herald*, George Slocombe, who went to interview him there. Afterwards, Sapru and Jayakar met Gandhiji. He told them that he could do nothing without consulting the members of the Working Committee. Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu and Jairamdas were already there. Motilal and Jawaharlal were brought from U.P. jails to join them at Yeravda. A meeting was arranged in the jail between Gandhiji and other members of the Working Committee. After some consultations a letter was sent to the Viceroy wherein the leaders did not show any anxiety for a quick settlement on terms not satisfactory to them. "The letter laid down conditions about the transfer of authority and [India's] right to secede."*

Meanwhile, the first Round Table Conference met in November in England. Sapru, Jayakar and Jinnah and some others were supposed to represent India. No progress was made towards evolving a constitution. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, expressed the hope that at the next meeting Congress participation would be forthcoming. As a result Gandhiji was released on January 26, 1931. It was unfortunate that Motilal passed away before the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations started. Motilal had been ailing even before the Salt Satyagraha commenced. During the course of the struggle he could not attend the public demonstrations held for the manufacture of salt. But he defied the law by manufacturing contraband salt in a test tube on a spirit lamp. He was arrested on June 30, 1930. His health further deteriorated in jail. He was, there-

* Geoffrey Ashe : *Gandhi : A Study in Revolution*, p. 294.

fore, released on September 11, as the Government wanted to avoid the odium of his death in jail. He was taken in the last stage to Lucknow for treatment and died on February 6, 1931. Swarup Rani, Jawaharlal and Gandhiji were by his side in his last moments. His body was taken to Allahabad and cremated at the Sangam. Gandhiji paid him a high tribute before the vast multitude that had gathered there. Afterwards in a Press statement he said: "My position is worse than a widow's. By a faithful life, she can appropriate the merits of her husband. I can appropriate nothing. What I have lost through the death of Motilalji is a loss for ever. 'Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.' "*

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Vol. III) by Tendulkar, p. 66.

# 15

# Gandhi-Irwin Pact

THE Congress Working Committee met in Allahabad and decided to negotiate without suspending the campaign.

On February 27 Gandhiji and Lord Irwin met in Delhi. They had several meetings which resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, announced on March 5, 1931. This pact was a compromise wherein Gandhiji had seemingly to give in a lot. Everybody expected that any pact with the Government would include a judicial inquiry into the excesses committed by the police and the army during the course of the movement. Gandhiji was, however, requested by Irwin not to insist on such an inquiry, as it would affect his prestige. Gandhiji, always anxious to accommodate his opponents, agreed. The Pact stipulated that the people who lived near the coastal areas were free to pick and manufacture salt. Peaceful picketing was not banned. All political prisoners were to be released and their confiscated properties restored. As for the future political set-up, the federal idea was favoured. The Pact also provided for safeguards, "in the interest of India". When the foreign Government talked of safeguards, they always had in view their own interests. Gandhiji, therefore, while admitting the need for safeguards, wanted them to be "demonstrably" in the interest of the people of India. Further, the Pact allowed Congressmen freedom to advocate complete independence, "Poorna Swaraj". To Gandhiji the real gain was that for the first time India and Britain had discussed matters concerning the country on equal terms. It

was not something that was forced on India. Gandhiji also hoped that progressively the conditions would improve and the British would no longer remain in India as masters.

Jawaharlal's reaction was different. He took it as a surrender and opposed it. Gandhiji, therefore, said that he would not insist on acceptance of the agreement if the Working Committee so decided. He had so far committed only himself and not the Congress. With some difficulty Jawaharlal withdrew his objection. Afterwards he had to admit that the Pact enhanced the prestige of the Congress even among those who were against it.

The next Congress was held in Karachi in March 1931. It had not been possible to hold it in December according to the usual practice. Vallabhbhai was the chosen President. The execution, despite Gandhiji's intercession, of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, convicted in a conspiracy case, had cast a pall of gloom and resentment over the country. As Gandhiji proceeded to Karachi, at several intervening stations some of those who had come to greet him carried black flags, showing their resentment at his inability to save the lives of the three patriots.

The main point to be considered at this session was the ratification of the Pact. The debate on this point was prolonged and even acrimonious. The younger group was highly critical of Gandhiji. However, the Pact was approved. The Congress also endorsed Gandhiji's interpretation of the "safeguards". Gandhiji at his own instance was chosen to be the sole representative of the Congress at the Second Round Table Conference. "Poorna Swaraj" as the goal was reiterated. The other important resolution passed at this Congress was about fundamental rights and the economic programme. This embodied principles of social justice which have since been incorporated in the Indian Constitution.

Though the younger leaders and some others were critical of Gandhiji, the masses took the Pact as a triumph for Gandhiji. This was apparent from the huge crowds that came to greet him at every station on his return journey.

On Irwin's departure, Willingdon became the Viceroy. He had been the Governor of Bombay and Madras. He had preconceived notions about India and these were bureaucratic. He had also his own ideas about Gandhiji and how he was to be tackled.

The bureaucracy was angry at the signing of the Pact with the Congress. The new Viceroy shared their attitude. Soon the officials started violating the terms of the Pact. Gandhiji was disturbed and was in half a mind not to attend the Round Table Conference. However, he ultimately agreed to go.

Reuter's special correspondent, who was on the same boat with Gandhiji, sought an interview with him and asked him about his programme in London. This interview is significant. It gives an idea of Gandhiji's conception of free India. He said: "I shall strive for a constitution which will release India from all thraldom and patronage and give her, if need be, the right to sin. I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with the rest of the world, neither exploiting nor being exploited, we should have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interest of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous. I hate the distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams, for which I shall struggle at the Round Table Conference."* It is sad to compare this picture with what exists in India today after twenty-two years of independence.

Gandhiji reached London on September 12. He had in his party his two secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, his son Devadas and Mirabehn. The British bureaucrats in India had painted Gandhiji as a crafty oriental, a clever schemer, a hypocrite with a saintly pose exploiting the people of India. They hated and also feared *him* as an unpredictable person. Winston Churchill had said: "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Vol. III) by Tendulkar, p. 141.

King-Emperor."*

In spite of the adverse picture of his personality, painted by bureaucrats in India and conservatives in England, a warm popular welcome awaited him in London. He decided to stay as the guest of Miss Muriel Lester at her Kingsley Hall Settlement in the East End, where the poor lived. The Hall was continuously surrounded by a vast crowd of Londoners, pressmen, missionaries, quakers, social and political workers, workmen and, in addition, faddists of all varieties. All were attracted towards Kingsley Hall to see and meet this unique person. He got wide publicity through the Press and the radio. Of course, some fantastic stories about him, his goat and his diet, etc., also found currency to the amusement of the West. He kept a busy schedule apart from his work in connection with the Conference. He sometimes went out visiting the homes of the working men living in the East End. During his morning walks he would chat and joke with them. Women and children soon became his friends. He became quite a favourite with the labouring class. He had also a large number of engagements to speak to various sections of the British population. He addressed Members of Parliament in one of the chambers in the House. Among other places, he visited Lancashire where there was unemployment following the Indian boycott of British cloth. In spite of that, the labourers heard him with attention and appeared to sympathise with and understand the Indian case. He succeeded in establishing grassroot contacts with the people of England. Though at the Round Table Conference he could gain nothing, he was the richer for having secured numerous friends and the goodwill of the people. He met and talked with several eminent men and women. Though Winston Churchill refused to meet him, Gandhiji met his son Randolph Churchill. He also met Lloyd George and Harold Laski. Lady Astor who had been critical at first was disarmed when she learnt that under Gandhiji's leadership women's emancipation had made great strides in India. He had a hilarious time with Bernard Shaw. Charlie Chaplin met him, though Gandhiji had not heard about this famous film star. At Oxford he stayed with Prof. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol. Among his admirers were Gilbert Murray and Prof. Edward Thompson.

* Quoted in Geoffrey Ashe's *Gandhi : A Study in Revolution*, p. 296.

He attended a party given by the King and the Queen. The invitation caused a great deal of concern to his friends about the dress he was to wear on the occasion. He decided to go in his usual dress. On his return when asked about his spare dress, he remarked that it was perfectly all right as "the King had enough on for both of us".

The situation in England was, however, not conducive to any outcome of the Round Table Conference favourable to India. Churchill and those who shared his outlook thought that the loss of India would spell disaster for the Empire. The economic crisis in England also precluded the British Government from giving a really serious thought to the Indian question. MacDonald, though he was still the Prime Minister, had weakened as the Tories were gaining ground. At the Conference itself the task was difficult and doomed to failure. The astute British politicians and the British bureaucrats in India had overloaded the Conference with handpicked minority representatives of their own. They had reduced Gandhiji to a "caste Hindu" spokesman. The most formidable among the minority leaders were Jinnah and Ambedkar. They denied the Congress and Gandhiji's claim to speak for the whole of India. The British argued that all minorities—Muslims, Untouchables, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Europeans—should have their "interests safeguarded" before self-government could be contemplated. Gandhiji, on the other hand, believed that the communal problem was a creation of the British policy of 'divide and rule' and it could not be solved unless they first withdrew. Their emphasis was on separate communal electorates for those whom they considered as minorities. The Congress reiterated its stand for joint electorates.

Gandhiji's first speech at the Conference was impressive. He gave a brief history of the Congress, its composition, its methods and its objects. He pointed out the difference between the Congress, the Government and the other parties. He said that the Congress stood for central responsibility, Indian federation and safeguards "in her interest". He added that the Prime Minister's statement fell short of Indian expectations. The Congress did not want a mere political constitution but a scheme of partnership between two equal nations. He accused the authorities of unduly fanning the communal question to settle which, he said, they need not have come all these 6,000 miles, as it could have been settled in India itself. The

main question was of constitution-building and not of communal settlement. He declared that he was not interested in a scheme for merely sharing power with the bureaucracy but he was out to get responsible government and the Congress was willing to go into the wilderness for an indefinite period to achieve this end.

The British now came out with a new proposal which was vicious in its character. So far, there had been talk of separate electorates for the Muslims only, but now it was proposed to give separate electorates to the untouchables who were part and parcel of Hindu society. Gandhiji reacted sharply to this sinister scheme. He pointed out that if separate electorates were granted to the untouchables, their position in Hindu society would remain unchanged. They were not after all changing their religion. Untouchables, he said, would not remain untouchables in perpetuity and he declared that "I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived". He vowed that "if I was the only person to resist this thing, I will resist it with my life". He also refused to be a party to the separate representation of other communities. He contended that all the other bodies represented sectional interests except the Congress which by its right of service represented all. It had a "universal platform recognizing no distinction of race, colour or religion".

The result was as expected. Gandhiji was swamped by the minority spokesmen, mainly yes-men of British politicians. They were willing to come to terms with the British on the basis of separate electorates which they thought gave them an advantage. As a matter of fact, separate electorates given to the minorities would perpetuate their being in a minority. In this stage-managed and manipulated Conference, Gandhiji could not make any headway. Towards the end he said: "While there is yet a little sand left in the glass, I want you to understand what the Congress stands for. It stands for liberty. Call it by any name you like." On the conclusion of the Round Table Conference Gandhiji, proposing a vote of thanks, used the ominous words: "I do not know in what direction my path will lie.... I may have to go in the opposite direction....Dignity of human nature requires that we must face the storms of life." The Round Table Conference was, in the words of C.F. Andrews, a "magnificent failure". It was a failure all right, but how very magnificent!

# 16

# Reign of Terror

WHILE all this was going on in England, news came from India that the Government had gone back upon its word, had broken the terms of the Pact and had launched a campaign of repression. Gandhiji received cables asking him to return to India. He had agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference only on the India Government's assurance that they would abandon the policy of repression.

On December 3, 1931 Gandhiji left England. He spent a few days with Romain Rolland at Villeneuve on Lake Leman. This was their first meeting. They discussed all subjects ranging from the state of Europe to the need of moral values, of truth and non-violence in this distracted world. Large gatherings came to Gandhiji's meetings, some to admire and others to heckle. He stood their heckling in good humour and tried to reply to their questions. On his way back he stopped in Rome but refused to be Mussolini's guest. He, however, could not avoid meeting him. He did not like his melodramatic and flamboyant pose. He told him ominously, "You are building a house of cards." The Pope refused to see him. Gandhiji paid a visit to the Sistine Chapel and was deeply moved on seeing the crucifix.

He returned to India on December 28, 1931. A royal reception awaited him in Bombay. Tumultuous crowds stood on the road-side and milled around Mani Bhavan, his headquarters in Bombay, to welcome him. But the political news was grave. A meeting of

the Working Committee was immediately called. It was also attended by leaders who had come to meet Gandhiji to bring to his notice what was happening in their respective areas. He was told that the Government had broken their word and had continued their repression. They had armed themselves with extraordinary powers through ordinances. It was reported to him that the main areas where inhuman brutalities had been perpetrated by the police were the N.-W.F.P., U.P. and Bengal. In the N.-W.F.P. a reign of terror had been let loose on the plea that Ghaffar Khan had refused to attend the Darbar called by the Commissioner and thus withheld his co-operation from the Government. Furthermore, he had preached Poorna Swaraj as the goal of India. He was arrested along with his brother Dr. Khan Saheb. The Khudai Khidmatgars, his followers, naturally demonstrated. The Government, alarmed at the popularity and effectiveness of Ghaffar Khan and his followers, wanted to crush them. The demonstrators were repeatedly fired upon. Men, women and children were shot at and killed.

In U.P. there was great unrest among the peasants due to the oppressive exactions of the zamindars. At places it took the form of a no-tax campaign, though only as a temporary measure, pending negotiations between the Government and the Congress. Hundreds had been arrested and their properties confiscated. All leading men of the U.P. Congress found themselves in prison. Jawaharlal was arrested as he was preparing to leave for Bombay to meet Gandhiji and to attend the Working Committee meeting.

In Bengal there were some terrorist incidents. As reprisal the police, with the help of goondas, entered the houses of people, beat them brutally and destroyed or confiscated their properties. All kinds of indignities were inflicted on the population, which were followed as usual by arrests. In the notorious Hijli detention camp, where political prisoners were kept, two of them were killed and twenty received injuries through police action. There was a reign of terror throughout Bengal. The over-all attitude of the Government indicated that there was a complete reversal of policy and the authorities had decided to rule with the lathi and the gun.

Getting these reports, Gandhiji bitterly remarked that these were "Christmas gifts from a Christian Viceroy". In England the Tories had come to power. They applauded the strong measures of

the Viceroy. But Sir Samuel Hoare warned the Viceroy that all this would ultimately recoil on them. Whatever might be the complexion of the Government in England and whoever be the Secretary of State or the Viceroy, the ultimate authority lay with the white bureaucracy in India, "the men on the spot". In his memoirs Morley writes about the trial of Tilak that if the Government of India had first consulted him or their legal advisers, they would not have taken the step they took. Tilak in jail was more dangerous than outside. Sir Samuel's warnings too went unheeded.

For three days reports of repression poured in from State after State. Gandhiji fully acquainted himself with the situation in the country and said there was no alternative left to the Congress but to resist all the wanton repression and cruelty by re-starting satyagraha. Some of the leaders, chief among them being Syed Mahmud, the General Secretary of the Congress, pointed out to Gandhiji that the country was exhausted after the 1930 repression and the response to satyagraha would not be adequate.* Gandhiji's reply was that this situation had not been created by the Congress and the people. The Government had thrown a challenge to them. Whatever may be the exhaustion, if the nation did not accept the challenge and gave in to tyranny it would never be able to rise. "We have to accept this challenge whether we are ready or not."

Gandhiji never began a movement without searching for an opportunity for a peaceful solution. He, therefore, sent a telegram to the Viceroy on December 29, 1931, saying that he was unprepared on his return to India to get the report of the ordinances and the wholesale repression, arrests and shootings that had taken place. He said he did not know whether their friendly relations had ended or whether he could still expect to "receive guidance" from the Viceroy as to the course of action he should pursue. To this a lengthy telegraphic reply came from the Viceroy's Secretary. It said that though the Viceroy expected co-operation from all "in the great task of constitutional reform" which they were determined to push forward, he could not reconcile himself with the Congress activities in the N.-W.F.P. and U.P. It added that in U.P., while the Government was devising means to give relief to the

* Afterwards Dr. Syed Mahmud took leave of the A.I.C.C. for reasons of health.

peasants, the Congress authorised a no-tax campaign which was still "being vigorously pursued". That had given rise to class and communal hatred. To meet it, the Government had been compelled to take action. In the North-West Frontier Province, the telegram said, Ghaffar Khan and his organisation were continuously engaged in activities against the Government. His speeches and his open, intensive preparations for a conflict with the Government were a grave menace to the peace of the province and the tribal areas and yet Ghaffar Khan's volunteers had been specially recognised as part of the Congress organisation by the A.I.C.C. All these reasons compelled him to take action without any further delay. It further said that as Gandhiji had been away from India, he might not be responsible for all these acts that had happened in his absence, and if he disclaimed his responsibility for them, he could meet the Viceroy.

Gandhiji sent a reply to this on January 1, 1932. In brief he said that his object in desiring a meeting with the Viceroy was to know the Government version of the grave and extraordinary measures that had been taken during the past months. He said he would be guilty of dishonourable conduct if he repudiated his colleagues in advance. He declared: "The constitutional issues dwindle into insignificance in the face of ordinances and acts which must, if not met with stubborn resistance, end in utter demoralisation of the nation. I hope no self-respecting Indian will run the risk of killing national spirit for a doubtful contingency of securing a constitution, to work which no nation with a stamina may be left."

Regarding the Frontier affairs, he said: "Your telegram contains a narration of facts which, on the face of them, furnish no warrant for arrests of popular leaders, passing of extra-legal ordinances, making life and property utterly insecure and shooting unarmed, peaceful crowds for daring to hold demonstrations against arrests of their trusted leaders....Nor am I able to detect in a mere refusal to attend the Darbar an offence warranting summary imprisonment." As for the charge that Ghaffar Khan was fomenting racial hatred, Gandhiji said, he had his "declaration to the contrary". However, if the Government believed this charge to be true, he should have been given an open trial.

Regarding the no-tax campaign in U.P., Gandhiji pointed out: "His Excellency is surely misinformed. The Congress did not authorise a no-tax campaign, but while negotiations were going on between Government and the Congress, the time for rent collection came. As a consequence, the local authorities began demanding rents. The Congress advised the peasants to suspend the payment of rent pending the result of the negotiations. Any Government which is jealous of the welfare of the masses would welcome the co-operation of an organisation like the Congress which undoubtedly exercises great influence over the masses and whose one ambition is to serve them faithfully; and let me add that I regard the withholding of payment of taxes as an inalienable, ancient and natural right of a people who have exhausted all other means of seeking freedom from an unbearable economic burden. I must repudiate the suggestion that the Congress has the slightest desire to promote disorder in any shape or form."

Regarding the Bengal situation, Gandhiji declared that while the Congress condemned assassination and other crimes and the methods of terrorism and would co-operate with the Government to stamp them out, it would resist by all non-violent methods the legalised terrorism perpetrated by the Government under the special powers of the Bengal Ordinance. He said he was willing to co-operate with the Government if co-operation would be mutual. The Viceroy's telegram did not give evidence of such sentiments.

As regards his personal liability for what had happened in India during his absence, Gandhiji said he did not repudiate his moral liability for the actions of his colleagues. He did not have detailed information about them and in order to get complete information, he wanted to meet the Viceroy to hear his version. He said, "I cannot conceal from His Excellency my opinion that the reply he has condescended to send was hardly a return for my friendly and well-meant approach, and if it is not yet too late, I would ask His Excellency to reconsider his decision." He further said: "Along with my desire and willingness to co-operate with Government, I must place my limitations before His Excellency. Non-violence is my absolute creed. I believe that civil disobedience is not only the natural right of a people... but that it is also an effective substitute for violence or armed rebellion." Gandhiji also sent

the Viceroy a copy of the resolution of the Working Committee which embodied instructions for starting civil disobedience.

The Working Committee said that after considering the situation created by the operation of the various ordinances and the shooting in the N.-W.F.P. and the numerous arrests, including those of Jawaharlal and Ghaffar Khan, it had come to the conclusion that co-operation with the Government was not possible unless the Government policy underwent a change. The Working Committee expressed its abhorrence of terrorism of any kind whatsoever, resorted to by individuals, but it equally condemned the terrorism practised by the Government as shown by its recent acts and ordinances. The Working Committee said that the Bengal Ordinance had no justification, much less ordinances of U.P. and the N.-W.F.P. It demanded the institution of a public enquiry into the events which had led to the promulgation of the ordinances. It said the Prime Minister's declaration before the Round Table Conference was wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of the Congress demand. It placed on record its opinion that nothing short of complete independence including control over Defence, External Affairs and Finance with such "safeguards" as may be demonstrably necessary in the interest of the nation would satisfy the Congress. If no satisfactory response came from the Government, the Working Committee called upon the nation "to resume civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes".

Instructions were issued to the people to adhere strictly to non-violence. They were to boycott foreign cloth and use hand-spun and hand-woven khadi. Liquor shops were to be picketed. They were to start picking and manufacturing salt. They were to organise processions and demonstrations but should carefully select for these demonstrations persons who would "stand lathi charge and bullets without moving from their respective places". It further said that boycott of British goods and concerns should be carried out vigorously. Finally, "all unjust orders and ordinances, non-moral laws and laws injurious to the nation should be civilly disobeyed."

The Viceroy replied that under the threat of civil disobedience an interview with Gandhiji was not possible. On January 3, 1932 Gandhiji again wrote expressing his deep regret at the Viceroy's

decision. He said that the Congress had extended no threat but had given an honest expression to their opinion. He told him that after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact the Congress had merely suspended the movement but had not called it off and this position had been accepted by the Irwin Government. On that understanding he had proceeded to London to attend the Round Table Conference. He accused the Government of having committed a breach of the Pact. However, he assured the Government that the campaign would be carried on "without malice and in a strictly non-violent manner". He said that the Government had banged the door in his face and that a fiery ordeal lay ahead of them. He further said that he had no quarrel "with men but with their measures". He sent appeals to some of his friends abroad to exert their influence on the authorities.

However, all his activities were cut short by his arrest on January 4, 1932 under the 1827 Regulations. He was taken to Yeravda jail as a State prisoner. Just before leaving his house, he gave a note to Father Verrier Elwin, an English admirer of his. The note said: "I would like you yourself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice, and God willing, I shall never do anything in that manner in future." His parting message to his countrymen was: "Infinite is God's mercy. Never swerve from truth and non-violence, never turn your back, and sacrifice your lives and all to win swaraj." Even at this moment he did not forget to send gifts to the British detectives who were detailed to guard him during his visit to England.

Sardar Patel was also arrested and was his companion in the Yeravda jail. Mahadevbhai soon joined them there. In a single day all the leaders of the Congress throughout the country were arrested. Swarup Rani Nehru, Motilal's wife, received lathi blows on her head in a procession. Kasturba was arrested. In two months over 32,000 were serving sentences for political offences.

The Congress and all the allied institutions were declared illegal and their bank accounts and properties confiscated. There was large-scale forfeiture of the properties not only of those who were arrested but also of their relatives and supporters. Lathi charges and whippings, both inside and outside the jail, became frequent. Under

such repression satyagraha took all forms—no-tax campaign, foreign cloth boycott, defiance of salt laws and forest laws. Heavy censorship of the Press and arrests of some journalists made it difficult for the public to get all the news. Mirabehn, therefore, started publishing a news bulletin giving news of the satyagraha and of police repression. Soon she too found herself in jail. British politicians belonging to Churchill's group praised the firm handling of the situation by the Viceroy.

Meanwhile, a section of the people—friends and admirers of Gandhiji and intellectuals abroad—were disturbed at the news of the happenings in India. They started an agitation for Gandhiji's release. Carl Heath acclaimed him as "a prophet of a new type of society". Ellen Wilkinson visited India with a delegation and wrote indignantly about the Indian situation on her return home. In the course of a letter to an English friend, Romain Rolland wrote: "In the eyes of thousands of men today, who consider the maintenance of the present form of society—imperialist and capitalist—intolerable, and who are determined to change it, the magnificent experiment in India of satyagraha is the only chance offered to the world of bringing about this social transformation without appeal to violence....It is either Gandhi or Lenin. In any case social justice will be done....For, if the India of satyagraha were to go down in the battle, it is Christ himself who would be pierced by it, with a supreme lance-thrust, on the cross. And this time there would be no resurrection."*

After going to jail Gandhiji wrote to the Secretary of State on March 11, 1932 making it plain to him that if they persisted with their idea of giving a separate electorate to the untouchables, he, as promise-bound, would have to resist it with his life. "...I hold separate electorate is harmful for them [untouchables] and for Hinduism....But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor a remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government, that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death." He also referred to another matter which was agitating his mind and which might enforce a similar fast. He wrote, "Repression appears to me to be crossing

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume III) by Tendulkar, p. 194.

what might be called legitimate bounds. A Governmental terrorism is spreading through the land. Free speech has been stifled. Goondaism is being practised in the name of law and order. Women who have come out for public service stand in fear of their honour being insulted. And all this is being done, in order to crush the spirit of freedom which the Congress represents."

Gandhiji did not get a satisfactory reply to his letter.

# 17

# Communal Award

ON August 17, 1932 MacDonald announced the Communal Award, giving separate electorates to the different communities including the untouchables. Gandhiji straightaway declared that he would have to resist this with his life. He wrote to say that he was opposed to the entire communal scheme but the part concerning untouchables was the breaking-point. It was a question of religious principle. It would perpetuate untouchability and the untouchable status would be written in the constitution. Many in England were angry at the news of Gandhiji's intended fast and dubbed it as political blackmail. However, he received support from some unexpected quarters there. Nehru in jail was critical of the fast. He considered it to be a religious and sentimental approach to a political question. But those who had faith in Gandhiji knew his unerring judgment in recognising the importance of an issue and the psychological moment for taking action that would galvanise the nation.

Gandhiji explained that his fast was not to coerce the British but to stir the Hindu conscience and inspire action. The fast began on September 20. Rajen Babu, Rajaji and other Congress leaders who were not yet in jail appealed to the Hindus to open their temples to the untouchables and to work vigorously for the removal of this stigma from Hindu society. M. C. Rajah, a leader of the untouchables, repudiated Ambedkar and condemned the Award. Tagore blessed Gandhiji and appealed to the Hindus to work for the fulfilment of

Gandhiji's mission. Soon things started moving. Hundreds of temples in Allahabad, Banaras, Calcutta and some places in the Indian states were thrown open to the untouchables. Caste Hindus fraternized with the untouchables at public functions and dined with them. Thousands of messages reached the prison assuring Gandhiji that discrimination against the untouchables would be removed. The politicians conferred with the Government to find a solution. Rajen Babu and Sapru went to Poona and stayed there to be able to contact Gandhiji at all stages of their negotiations with the authorities. As a result of this, the Poona Pact was evolved in place of the Communal Award. Under this, the Depressed Classes were to get 147 seats in the provincial legislatures. This was in excess of what was due to them on a population basis. Though the electorates were to be joint, the untouchable candidates were to be selected in primary elections held by them only. On September 25, the Pact was ratified and on the 26th it was simultaneously announced in London and in Delhi. Gandhiji broke his fast. Jawaharlal, who was critical of the fast, had to concede: "What a magician! I thought he was a little man sitting in Yeravda prison. And how well he knew how to pull the strings that move people's hearts!" Gandhiji's success in this matter raised the sagging morale of the people and infused new hope in them. Out of this crisis India emerged morally superior to her opponents.

Gandhiji named the untouchables Harijans. Still a State prisoner, he took up Harijan uplift work with full vigour. He set up an all-India organisation with Birla as chairman and Thakkar Bapa (A. V. Thakkar of the Servants of India Society) as secretary to organise this work. Gandhiji issued a series of statements to educate the people and to focus their attention on the need and urgency of anti-untouchability work. In one of his statements he said that breaking the fast carried with it the implications of resuming it if the reform was not relentlessly pursued. He asked the reformers and workers to carry the message of freedom to every untouchable home. Tagore raised his powerful voice in support of Gandhiji's mission. Addressing a public meeting at Poona, he said: "Today in our determined effort, let us all join Mahatmaji in his noble task of removing the burden of the ages, the burden of disrespect upon the bent back of those who have been

stigmatised for the accident of their birth....We are not only casting off the chain of India's moral enslavement but indicating the path for all humanity. We are challenging the victimization, wherever and in whatever form it exists, to stand the test of relentless questioning of conscience which Mahatmaji has brought to bear upon our day."* On September 29 the Government withdrew the facilities given to Gandhiji to contact workers in connection with Harijan work. Gandhiji resented this as what he was doing was humanitarian work.

Untouchability Abolition Week was observed throughout India. Public meetings were held everywhere. Inter-caste gatherings and dinners were arranged. Temples, roads and wells were thrown open to Harijans. In February 1933 Gandhiji started publishing a weekly paper *Harijan* to promote the anti-untouchability campaign. The issues of this paper carried powerful articles from his pen exposing the shameful and humiliating position of the Harijans and repudiating the arguments of orthodox Hindus that untouchability was an essential part of Hinduism. The entire effort was to stir the conscience of his co-religionists to redress this age-old iniquity perpetrated on the weakest section of society. He declared he was bent upon the removal of untouchability "root and branch". He found no warrant for it in the Book of Life, the *Gita*. According to it, all life came from God and also returned to Him. Where then was the place for distinction between one caste and another?

He placed a practical programme before the workers. Apart from doing propaganda against untouchability, they were asked to promote cleanliness in the lives and surroundings of the untouchables. They were to devise improved methods for carrying on their unclean occupations in order to mitigate obnoxious aspects of their work. Later on, this came to be known as Bhangi Mukti which is still being pursued by Gandhian institutions and in which much headway has been made. Harijan children were to be educated and adults were to be made literate so that they could improve their own lot.

Temple entry was the primary issue before Gandhiji. Ambedkar and the socialists did not give temple entry the priority that Gandhiji gave it. For them civil and social disabilities were more important

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume III) by Tendulkar, p. 217.

and deserving of greater attention. But Gandhiji thought otherwise. Without minimising the importance of the removal of the other disabilities of the Harijans, he held that nothing would bring about the great psychological change in the Harijans as the right to enter temples. He said he had been striving for years to identify himself with the masses. He, therefore, understood the mass feelings better. "I am thinking of the uncultured dumb many. After all, temples play a most important part in the life of the masses and I, who have been eager all my life to identify myself with the illiterate and the downtrodden, cannot be satisfied until all the temples are open to the outcastes of Hindu humanity."

Appasaheb Patwardhan in Ratnagiri jail sought permission to clean the jail latrines. This the authorities refused to give him as it was against the jail rules. Gandhiji suddenly decided to start a fast on December 2, 1932 in support of his demand. He said he was equally capable of risking his life by undertaking a fast either for a great cause or in support of a dear comrade. He said he could not sit unconcerned and allow a friend to die. Fortunately the Government settled the matter satisfactorily.

The other problem facing Gandhiji was that of the opening of the Guruvayur temple in Malabar in Kerala. Kelappan had been doing public work in Malabar particularly among the Harijans. Almost simultaneously with Gandhiji's fast he undertook a fast unto death to get the Guruvayur temple opened to the Harijans. Gandhiji persuaded him to give up the fast and wait for three months before resuming it as he felt sufficient notice had not been given to the trustees of the temple. He promised to "share his burden" if the temple was not opened to the Harijans by January 1, 1933. The reformers were facing great odds in this area. The Zamorin and the orthodox sections of the people of Malabar resisted all the attempts of the reformers and raised various objections including legal ones against the violation of a long-established custom. Dr. Subbaroyan's bill was prepared for the Madras Legislature to overcome these objections. Another bill was prepared for the Central Legislature. The Viceroy thereupon took the strange decision that the Government would announce by January 15 whether they would give permission for the introduction of Dr. Subbaroyan's bill in the Madras Legislature.

Gandhiji had plunged himself completely into this great social and humanitarian reform movement, but as time passed, he realised what a tremendous task he had undertaken. Both by its magnitude and its deep ramifications in Hindu society it appeared almost impossible to eradicate untouchability. This age-old evil was too deep-rooted. Efforts had been made from the times of the Buddha to rid Hindu society of it. In the Middle Ages too some efforts in this direction were made by the saints of Sant Mat—Guru Nanak, Kabir and others,—but the evil had persisted. People had become immune through the centuries to the sufferings and humiliations of the untouchables, and the iniquity that the system involved. Gandhiji, therefore, had again to take some drastic steps to give a jolt to the Hindu conscience. On May 8, 1933 all of a sudden he decided to undertake a 21-day fast. He attributed it to an inner call or a command from above. Friends pleaded with him not to put his life in danger as he had to do other more important work. His answer was: "If God required more service from my body, even the fast would not dissolve it." However, he was released on the first day of the fast (May 8, 1933) and was taken to Parnakuti, Lady Thackersey's residence. Here he completed his 21 days' fast. The Central Government's reaction to the fast, as stated in Home Secretary Hallett's circular letter dated May 15, 1933, was that no official notice should be taken "in the case of Mr. Gandhi's death and no Government office, court or institution should be closed on that account".

# 18

# Harijan Tour

ON his release Gandhiji directed that the satyagraha movement be suspended. Therefore, on the completion of his fast he telegraphed to the Viceroy his intention to "explore the possibilities of peace". The Viceroy sent him a blunt refusal. Gandhiji was re-arrested on August 1 when he resumed civil disobedience by commencing the march from his Ashram in Ahmedabad to Ras village in Gujarat, and was taken again to Yeravda. Three days later, he was released but was served with an order to remain within the limits of Poona. He defied the order and was arrested on August 4, 1933 and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. On August 16, he again started a fast in the jail to get the same facilities which he had earlier enjoyed with regard to his work for the anti-untouchability campaign. His request was not granted but he was released on August 23 as his health started declining rapidly. He now faced a dilemma. If he courted arrest, he would be denied the facilities to carry on his reform movement, but if he fasted in jail to secure these rights, he would be released. He, therefore, decided that he would do no political work for the unexpired portion of his sentence.

When Gandhiji was convalescing at Parnakuti, Jawaharlal Nehru and I proceeded from Allahabad to Poona to know from him what the future programme would be as he had suspended mass civil disobedience. At this meeting, Jawaharlal expressed his dissatisfaction with the decision taken and also expressed doubts about the constructive programme. Though we were living in the same

place, Gandhiji asked Jawaharlal to write a letter to him bringing out the points of disàgreement and said he would reply to him. Gandhiji wanted everything to be in writing so as to avoid possible misunderstanding afterwards.*

As he had resolved to avoid political activity, he devoted his entire energies to Harijan work. He soon gifted Sabarmati Ashram to the Harijan Sevak Sangh and moved to Wardha in September 1933 where Jamnalal Bajaj had been pressing him to come.

On November 7, 1933 he started his famous tour of India for the uplift of the Harijans. He addressed hundreds of meetings exhorting the Hindus to take to Harijan uplift work in expiation of centuries of oppression and exploitation of their brethren. He repudiated and ridiculed the idea of people being high or low, clean or unclean by birth. He wanted all public temples to be opened to the Harijans. He said : "Temples are for sinners, not for saints; but who is to judge where no man is without sin ?" He asked the Hindus to shed their prejudice against the Harijans and draw them into their fold.

As usual with him, this tour was also a big collection drive for the Harijan fund. At every place he appealed to rich and poor to donate their mite. His magic appeal was such that women and girls who came to attend the meetings parted with their ornaments to him. He would joke and chat with them and tell them that they should unburden themselves of the ornaments they were wearing as they looked more beautiful without them. While travelling in trains, at every station thousands flocked to see him. One could see his hand stretched out of the window for contributions. He wanted them to get a sense of participation in this great mission. His autographs had a price and the proceeds went to the Harijan fund.

The orthodox Hindus were observing the activities of Gandhiji with anger, dismay and even hatred. Their old citadels were crumbling. They, therefore, organised black flag demonstrations against him. Their active members came to the meetings to heckle and harass him. Controversies were raised in the papers. They accused him of heresy. The orthodox tried their utmost to provoke

* For this correspondence, see Appendices IV and V.

the workers into violence so that the "apostle of non-violence" may be discredited. To meet all this, Gandhiji decided in May 1934 in Puri (Orissa) that he would cover the rest of his journey in Orissa on foot, thus fully exposing himself to the attacks of his opponents. He thought this would disarm them but he was mistaken.

He went to Poona to commence his tour of Maharashtra on June 25. While he and his party were on the way to the Municipal Hall, a bomb was thrown at them. Though he did not receive any injury, some members of his party were injured. He expressed his deep pity for the bomb-thrower and said, "I am not aching for martyrdom, but if it comes in my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in defence of the faith I hold in common with millions of Hindus, I shall have well earned it."*

In August 1934, his Harijan tour ended. In one of his speeches in Bihar, while referring to his Harijan tour, he said that the "spiritual message is self-propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the Harijan tour has been the latest forcible illustration of this." According to his assessment, untouchability was on its last legs. He believed that he had succeeded in bringing to the caste Hindus the realisation that the injustice perpetrated against the Harijans through the ages had to be atoned for. He also believed that a consciousness of their rights was growing among the Harijans. The revolution had begun. But he was now facing a two-pronged attack—one was from the Sanatanist and orthodox Hindus, the other was from Ambedkar and the Harijan leaders of his way of thinking. The latter carried on a bitter campaign against Gandhiji and Hinduism. All that he did for the Harijans was suspect in their eyes. Though Ambedkar was one of those who had been a party to the Poona Pact, he soon started criticizing Gandhiji's stand on the issue of joint electorates. He repeatedly asserted that the Harijans would have to leave the Hindu fold. Gandhiji's reply to this was that religion was not for barter. "The souls of 50 million people were not to be bartered away." Gandhiji's great campaign against the social evil was really the beginning of the end. It is true that untouchability did not die but the main resistance to its removal was broken. The protagonists for the maintenance of the old order were demoralised.

* Quoted in *Mahatma Gandhi* by B. R. Nanda, p. 356.

The total uprooting of an old and established iniquitous system in all its aspects, economic, social, religious and conventional, takes a long time and demands persistent work. During the tenure of Congress ministries from 1937 to the beginning of the war, many of the legal disabilities against the Harijans were removed. The Constitution of free India has made the practice of untouchability illegal.

# 19

# In Stricken Bihar

WHILST Gandhiji was in the midst of this hectic tour of South India, he received news of the earthquake which shook North Bihar on January 15, 1934. The earthquake affected an area of 77,700 sq. km. with a population of a crore and a half. Whole towns in North Bihar had been razed to the ground. Not a single house in some of the affected areas remained intact. The earth had burst open; in several places big chasms, 60 metres long and 10 metres deep, had been formed. Sand was pushed up from below and many wells and tanks were choked up. Thousands of acres of cultivable land were rendered unfit for cultivation. Figures of houses damaged were estimated at 10 lakhs, hundreds were killed and lakhs rendered homeless. The rail track for about 1,440 km. was damaged practically all the way. Bridges and rail lines were twisted into fantastic shapes. Calamity of such a magnitude left the people stunned and the entire country was shocked. Even the Government did not know how to cope with it, unless the unreserved co-operation of the public was forthcoming. This they could only get with the help of the Congress. Therefore, Babu Rajendra Prasad was released on January 21. He wired to Gandhiji about the havoc that had been wrought. Gandhiji was at Poona and was at the time doing Harijan work. In his reply to Rajendra Babu Gandhiji wrote, "What comfort shall I give ? What will I be able to do ?" Immediately, however, he issued an appeal for help to the stricken people of Bihar and started making collections.

In March 1934 he visited Bihar. An interesting controversy was raised by a statement of Gandhiji wherein he had said that the calamity which had befallen Bihar was a "retribution for the sin of untouchability". Educated India, particularly sophisticated urban people, protested against such an interpretation of a natural calamity. The controversy was led by no less a person than Tagore, who considered it an unscientific interpretation of a physical phenomenon which encouraged an element of unreason. He said if Gandhiji ascribed the earthquake to the sin of untouchability, the orthodox people in their turn could very well say that Gandhiji's heresy had evoked God's vengeance. Gandhiji, however, stuck to his belief. He said there was an indissoluble link between matter and spirit. "To me the earthquake was no caprice of God, nor a result of the meeting of mere blind forces. We do not know the laws of God nor their working. Knowledge of the tallest scientist or the spiritualist is like a particle of dust. If God is not a personal being for me like my earthly father, He is infinitely more. He rules me in the tiniest detail of my life. I believe literally that not a leaf moves but by His will. Every breath I take depends upon His sufferance."*

I am afraid both the parties to the controversy were wrong. A natural calamity causes pain and suffering. These are not physical but psychological phenomena. Pain and suffering must have psychological causes, whatever may be the physical occasion. Therefore, to say that the calamity that causes pain and suffering is merely a physical phenomenon would be wrong. However, for Gandhiji to cite the sin of untouchability as the cause of the suffering of the people of Bihar was to presume that he was in the confidence of God! Untouchability was not particularly a sin committed by the residents of North Bihar alone.

This great calamity called Congress workers and others to go to Bihar and help Rajendra Babu to organise the work of relief and rehabilitation. Representatives from almost every province came with money and material to help the stricken people. Gandhiji's presence and his *darshan* were a solace to the suffering. Often even *darshan* was not enough. They wanted to touch him and thus receive his benediction. Some of the backward villagers adopted

* Quoted in *Mahatma Gandhi* by B. R. Nanda, p. 357.

fantastic methods to do this. From behind the thick wall of legs some would poke in a lathi and touch his feet with its end. Often when Gandhiji returned in the evening there would be scratches and bruises all over his legs inflicted by his admirers. Agatha Harrison, who was with Gandhiji for two days during his tour in Bihar, gave a graphic description of what she saw. She wrote in a letter to a friend: "How can I describe these two days to you? With the exception of a few miles of route in the outlying districts we drove between walls of people. As we neared a village or town, these human walls would press in almost to the point of suffocation in an effort to see this much-loved man, Mahatma Gandhi.... From my vantage point I saw the expression on their faces, and was dumb. For it was as though they had seen a god....I have never seen anything like the surge of people at these meetings....so great was the anxiety to see this apostle of non-violence."*

Gandhiji along with Rajen Babu visited all the main towns and motored through the affected areas. He addressed crowded meetings. He told them: "I have come to see and help you and not to talk. But there are just two things I want to say to you. The first is this. The relief committees have the money, and either beggars or workers will take it. And I want no beggars. Only those unfit for work may ask for alms. For the able-bodied to beg is...to become thieves." Secondly, he told them that "God has Himself sent us this gift. We must accept it as a gift from Him, and then we shall understand its meaning.... It is this, that untouchability must go, that is to say, nobody must consider himself higher than another."**

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume III) by Tendulkar, p. 310.

** Ibid, p. 312.

# 20

# Satyagraha Suspended

THE Satyagraha movement was suspended on July 23, 1933. There was again a demand for Council entry. Gandhiji also felt that it would be good for some politicians to engage themselves with work in the Councils. On August 4, 1934 Dr. Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. B. C. Roy arrived at Patna to discuss with him the proposal for the revival of the Swaraj Party and for participation in the next general elections. Gandhiji welcomed the move though his own views regarding Council entry, he said, remained the same. Mass civil disobedience had already been suspended when Gandhiji was in Poona, but individual civil disobedience was continued. At Patna this also was suspended. He confined it to himself and said that satyagraha was purely a spiritual weapon which not all could understand. He himself could claim to be an expert though still a searcher.

It sometimes happened that Gandhiji did the right thing but the reasons he advanced for doing the right things were far from convincing. Satyagraha had already spent its force. Few were courting jail then. The movement had to be suspended, but the reason which Gandhiji gave for it was rather curious. He came to know that one of the important members of his Ashram had not performed the task assigned to him by the jail authorities. He, therefore, suspended even individual satyagraha and, as stated before, confined it to himself. He ought to have known that some of the best of satyagrahis did not perform in jail the tasks assigned to them.

On a query as to what the people who were being released from jail should do, he placed before them nation-building constructive work, especially the work in connection with the removal of untouchability. We have said that people were no more courting jail. This was due not merely to exhaustion but because, after Gandhiji's Harijan fast, the public attention was powerfully diverted from the political issues to this problem. Owing to his vigorous campaign against untouchability many of the workers were drawn towards it.

The decisions of Gandhiji to suspend individual satyagraha and to support the parliamentary programme were not liked by most Congressmen. They were unable to appreciate the reasons behind these decisions. This was because the conception of the general run of Congressmen regarding satyagraha was narrow. They thought of it merely as a political weapon to dislodge the British, while Gandhiji thought of it in more comprehensive terms. For him it meant the reform of national life. It touched all aspects of life—political, social, economic and even personal.

Jawaharlal wrote that the news gave him "a stab of pain", that he now felt spiritual isolation and that the Congress ideals had been abandoned. Gandhiji assured him that there was no change in him, that he had not deviated from the ideal of complete independence of the country, and that he believed that all his steps would lead towards that end.* He concluded, "I fancy that I have a knack for knowing the need of the time."**

These decisions of Gandhiji led the Government to believe that, by rigorous censorship and restrictions imposed on him, they had successfully sealed him off from the public and gradually his political influence would wane. As usual, the authorities suffered from some kind of self-delusion, or they would not have failed to notice the reverence and the love the people showered on Gandhiji during his tour of Bihar.

Since 1933 all the Congress organisations had been declared illegal. But by some oversight the A.I.C.C. had not been so declared. The leaders, therefore, decided to call a meeting of this body to review the situation. It met in Patna on May 18 and 19,

* For this correspondence, see Appendices VI and VII.

** Quoted in *Mahatma Gandhi* by B. R. Nanda, p. 369.

1934. It endorsed the decision on Council entry and appointed a Parliamentary Board under Dr. Ansari's chairmanship to organise elections and other parliamentary work. Discussion about Gandhiji's endorsement of the parliamentary programme continued among Congressmen. Even Vallabhbhai doubted the wisdom of the decision. Gandhiji explained that the revival of the Swaraj Party was badly needed. "The group which has stood so many vicissitudes does need a niche in the Congress." He explained again that there might be "an element of inexperience and self-interest among those who are in favour of revival of this group; we can control it; we can do nothing more and nothing less".

The Congress Socialist Party also came into being at this time in Patna under the leadership of Acharya Narendra Deva. Jayaprakash became its General Secretary. The party strongly opposed the Council entry programme and was critical of Gandhiji's mode of thinking and acting. There was little understanding of non-violence or the constructive programme. These differences became clear during the Patna meeting of the Socialists.

This divergence of views came to be more and more accentuated as days passed. It made Gandhiji think in terms of quitting the Congress. He told his intimate circle that he was thinking of doing so not out of "anger or through disappointment" but because he wanted the Congress to be free to chalk out its own course. He said that for the next three years he was going to devote himself to village uplift work. Meanwhile, the Government was progressively lifting the ban on the Congress and its allied organisations and releasing Congress workers, who resumed their normal Congress activities.

Though Gandhiji had discussed with his closest associates his plan to leave the Congress, he had not yet taken a final decision. But the rumour was in the air and it leaked out to the Press. Gandhiji thereupon thought it necessary to issue a statement clarifying his position, which he did on September 17, 1934 from Wardha. He believed that a large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of his "method and views, and the programme based upon them". He felt that he was a hindrance to the natural growth of the Congress, and that instead of remaining the most democratic organisation, it was dominated by his personality. This, he said, he did not like. He was conscious that there was a growing

difference between his outlook and that of many Congressmen. He had faith in khadi not only as an economic programme which would give some small wage to the unemployed and the under-employed, but he believed it also to be a living link between the Congress and the masses. He felt that, as the civil disobedience movement had ended, parliamentary work was necessary for some and it should be encouraged. For this reason he gave support to the Council entry programme and this had offended many Congressmen. He did not want them to suppress their views in deference to him. "If they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For, to be in active opposition should be unthinkable."

He further wrote that he differed from them regarding the policy to be followed towards the Indian states. They did not also like his methods of tackling the untouchability question. He doubted whether, after 14 years of trial, many Congressmen really believed in non-violence. It was increasingly difficult for him to carry the reason of fellow Congressmen with him in the resolutions passed by the A. I. C. C. They expressed a sense of oppression and this feeling of theirs also oppressed him. "If we are at all to grow in our pursuit, we must be free from this sense of oppression." He explained that he had recommended suspension of civil resistance. He believed that Congressmen's faith in non-violence was not unadulterated in thought, word and deed. "It is now my paramount duty to devise ways and means of showing demonstrably to the Government and the terrorists the efficacy of non-violence as a means of achieving the right thing, including freedom in every sense of the term. . . .I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action. Satyagraha of which civil resistance is but a part is to me the universal law of life. Truth is my God. I can only search Him through non-violence and in no other way."*

* Quoted in *Mahatma* (Volume III) by Tendulkar, p. 365.

# 21

# Revitalizing Rural India

GANDHIJI reasserted that he stood for 'complete independence' but he doubted if Congressmen understood the same thing by that expression. Further, according to him, ends and means were convertible terms but Congressmen believed that the ends justified the means. "It is the sum total of these differences which has sterilized the existing Congress programme.... Members have failed to reduce it to practice, and yet I have no other programme, save untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, total prohibition, khadi, swadeshi and the revival of village industries." "Personally, I would like to bury myself in an Indian village," he added. He also drew the attention of Congressmen to the growing corruption in the organisation.

He suggested certain changes in the Congress constitution to discipline it and to make it a more effective organisation. He wanted replacement of the words 'legitimate and peaceful' in the Congress pledge by 'truthful and non-violent', replacement of the four-anna franchise by compulsory delivery by Congressmen of a certain quantity of hand-spun yarn every month, and every Congress voter to be a habitual wearer of khadi.

The next Congress met in Bombay from October 26 to 28, 1934 under the presidentship of Rajendra Babu. During the session it accepted Gandhiji's decision to retire "with a deep sense of gratitude for his unique services to the nation and reiterated its confidence in his leadership". It also accepted his suggestion that the Congress

members should be habitual wearers of khadi and the rule of compulsory hand-spun yarn was included in a modified form in the pledge. It also gave enthusiastic support to Gandhiji's programme of village industries and passed a long resolution about it after an animated discussion. J. C. Kumarappa was authorised to give shape to the All-India Village Industries Association under Gandhiji's guidance. Another keenly discussed resolution was on the Parliamentary Board, its composition and functioning.

The Socialists had been talking about confiscation of private property. An official resolution declared that the Congress was against all such talk. It was for me to explain in the Subjects Committee and in the open session the meaning of this resolution. I pointed out why the Congress was against loose talk about confiscation of private property. It may mean freedom given to individuals and groups to do what they liked. This would create confusion. In Russia, during the Revolutionary upheaval, the tenants had taken possession of the lands of the landlords and the labourers had taken possession of factories. The result was not equal distribution of land but whoever had the power took possession of whatever land he could. So far as factories were concerned, the labourers drove away the owners but did not know how to manage them. When the revolutionary Government was in saddle, it had again to redistribute the confiscated property in accordance with law. I pointed out that every Government confiscated private property through taxation. When it comes to power, the Congress would also have to do so. But it would be done on a fair and equitable basis and in accordance with law, without creating confusion.

At this session I was chosen the General Secretary of the Congress. It was usual for the Secretary to belong to the same province as the President. But I was considered as good a Bihari as any other.

The reaction of the authorities to Gandhiji's retirement from the Congress and to the resolutions that were passed at the Bombay session about khadi and village industries was conveyed in a circular letter, dated November 23, 1934 to all Local Governments by the Home Secretary, Hallett. From this long circularI shall quote here some significant portions. About the resolution on the All-India Village Industries Association, the circular says: "It may be looked upon as a *bona fide* campaign of economic reconstruction with no

ulterior political objective. This view, however, overlooks certain important facts. In the resolution a specific reference is made to the fact that the aim of the Congress has been since its inception progressive identification with the masses....If, therefore, the Congress was to become more closely identified with the masses, it was desirable to adopt new measures and the best hope of success lay in adopting measures which would contribute to the improvement of their economic conditions.... The penetration of these Congress workers into the villages on work to which no exception could be taken would also give them opportunities of spreading political ideas and of establishing their influence."

About Gandhiji's retirement, the circular says: "It is clear that Mr. Gandhi has once again shown himself to be a very astute political leader; his mental and physical vigour is reported to be unabated and the session has resulted in yet another personal triumph, for he had succeeded in keeping the divergent elements, if not in one organisation, at least under one leadership, his own."

Having divested himself of the responsibility of leadership of the Congress, Gandhiji on his return to Wardha gave full attention to village reconstruction and the organisation of the All-India Village Industries Association. Jamnalal Bajaj placed one of his buildings with a large compound and garden at his disposal for the headquarters of the Association, and this came to be called Maganwadi. Kumarappa, the Secretary, enthusiastically took up the work of the revival of village industries and the establishment of new industries suited to the rural areas. Maganwadi also became the headquarters of training and research in village industries. Gandhiji gave his ideas about turning waste into wealth. The Association also started a weekly, *Gram Udyog Patrika.* It carried necessary instructions for the revival of the old cottage industries and the establishment of new ones.

In April 1936, Gandhiji decided to live in a village which would enable him to appreciate the difficulties and problems of the villagers better. This would also be a laboratory for his experiments. Mirabehn was already living and working in a nearby village, Segaon. Gandhiji selected this village for his residence and renamed it Sevagram. It was a small backward village with 600

inhabitants, a cluster of huts with no roads or post office. It soon became a centre of activity. It was from here that he enunciated and announced his new educational system and later founded the Talimi Sangh. Before organising the Talimi Sangh he called a meeting of educationists and ministers of education from the Congress-administered provinces. They were convinced of the scientific nature of the new system and promised wholehearted support. Gandhiji believed that education to be real should be activity-based and by the time the child completed 7 or 8 years of schooling, he should have not only a fair amount of theoretical knowledge but also practical training in some art or craft.

Gandhiji wanted the activity of the children to be so purposeful that their work would yield some small income. It would go towards meeting part of the school expenses. He thought this was necessary in a poor country like India, if education was to reach the remotest village. Such an education, he thought, would stop the exodus of the bright boys from the village to the city. This system also provided that the child be adjusted to his social environment. Interesting experiments were carried out at the Sevagram schools under the direction and guidance of two devoted educationists, Aryanayakam and his wife Asha Devi.

In Sevagram Gandhiji's whole effort was to teach the villagers to raise their own standard of living and to be self-sufficient through their own effort. Some important problems like rural indebtedness and the reform of the tenancy laws could not be tackled without political power, but he wanted the villagers to do whatever could be done by them through their own effort to improve their condition. They could, for instance, improve village sanitation. To this end, he made them experiment on different types of latrines, different systems of drainage and disposal of garbage by cheap methods, suited to rural conditions. Appropriate literature was made available for the training of workers. Gandhiji had all his life been interested in nutrition and dietetics, and had carried on many experiments on himself and his Ashramites. To improve the kitchen, he devised a smokeless chullah which he tried to popularise. His study of and work in villages hardly left any aspect of their life untouched. His idea was that every village should be a semi-independent republic. It should be self-sufficient in the

necessities of life. For other things there should be co-operation among the villages. He did not want the villages to depend on the cities, rather the cities should get, as in old times, the surplus produce of the villages. He wanted a simple, active and purposeful life for the villages where inequalities in incomes and in standards of living were to be toned down. All this would require discipline and self-regulation. It might appear there was a utopian element in his dream of a new India, but if his social and economic schemes had been worked with sincerity in free India, much of the unemployment and imbalance in our economy would have been mitigated.

In order to put rural India in the centre of the picture, he suggested that the annual Congress session be held not in a city, as had been the practice, but in some village. He wanted the Congress-nagars to be erected with only such material as was locally available. The first Congress of this kind was held in Faizpur, a village in Maharashtra. It was a township made out of bamboos and mats. The decorations were simple and adapted from rural patterns. The effect was beautiful. The township was designed by Nandalal Bose, the eminent artist, and his companions from Santiniketan.

The British Government's suspicion even of Gandhiji's social, economic and humanitarian activities was so great that they watched them with apprehension. It would appear they understood him better than many Congressmen. They instructed the village watchmen to keep an eye on the activities of the village workers and make counter-propaganda against them.

# 22

# Popular Governments in Provinces

WE have anticipated events. While Gandhiji was thus preoccupied with these activities in his little hut in Sevagram, the Congress was preparing to meet the challenge of the new elections to be held under the Act of 1935. There was also the question whether after success in the elections the Congress should assume office. Opinions were divided on both these issues. It was obvious that in many of the provinces the Congress would be returned with a comfortable majority. It could form a Government if it so decided.

Jawaharlal, who had been abroad due to his wife Kamala's illness, returned to India in March 1936. He had come full of ideas about socialism which he wanted to try in India. He was not satisfied with the so-called old leadership, though some of its members were as young as he. I have an idea that 'old' in his mind was associated with those who totally accepted Gandhiji's leadership. He was also not happy about the emphasis that Gandhiji laid upon the constructive programme. He called the *charkha* an old dame's work, though he himself plied it and wore khadi. A younger group had formed itself, as we have said before, into the Congress Socialist Party. It wanted some kind of speedy action but was not clear about the form that such action should take. Nor was Jawaharlal clear about it. He more or less identified himself with the so-called left. He spoke their language. However, as we

shall see, he did not want to cut himself off from Gandhiji or even the old leadership. The Socialists considered Jawaharlal as their leader. Gandhiji and the old leadership had no objection to allow Jawaharlal to reshape the Congress in accordance with his views. His name was proposed and accepted for the presidentship of the Lucknow Congress held in April 1936, though there was a convention that the President should not belong to the province where the Congress session was held.

In his presidential address he said that the Congress would contest the elections only for propaganda purposes but he was not ready to co-operate with the Government in the formation of the provincial governments. He had previously declared the new constitution under the 1935 Act as "a new charter of slavery" because he thought it was "responsibility without power". It is true that the powers of the ministers were limited not only because the Centre retained all the important subjects and all the expanding revenues but also because the Governor was vested with over-riding powers. The Congress, however, decided to participate in the elections. An election manifesto was drawn up. It reaffirmed the Congress rejection of the new constitution and demanded a constitution based on the country's freedom to be framed by a Constituent Assembly. It also said that the Congress realised that independence could not be achieved through the legislatures as they were then constituted. Nor could the problems of poverty and unemployment be tackled by the people unless they had full power.

The question then arose about the formation of the Working Committee. The crucial point was as to who should be the General Secretary. I had in the Subjects Committee annoyed Jawaharlal by my remarks about the Socialists. Their complaint was that I had addressed their Secretary, Jayaprakash Narayan, by his name and not as the Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. I said I could not do that without the permission of the Congress, which had not so far recognised it as a party within itself. I then jocularly remarked, "Tomorrow there may be a Congress lawyers' party and even a Congress dancers' party and was I to recognise them?" This not only angered the Socialist friends but also Jawaharlal. In the open session too where I was seconding the main resolution, I said something about the Socialists and he inter-

rupted me. I said if I were not to express my views, I would rather not speak and I resumed my seat.

When it came to the question of forming the Working Committee, Jawaharlal approached Gandhiji. Gandhiji asked him to meet Vallabhbhai and Rajendra Babu. He met them. The first question they asked him was as to who would be the General Secretary. My name appeared to be out of the question. However, Jawaharlal promptly replied, "Kripalani, of course." The rest was easy. He also took Bhulabhai Desai on the Working Committee. This greatly surprised some of us even from among what was called the Old Guard.

The main point of difference between the so-called old leadership and the Socialists was whether the country could afford to divide different sections of India's population to wage a class war when they were all united on the question of eliminating foreign rule from India and achieving independence. At that time there was no powerful capitalist class in the country. Almost the whole of the business class was with the Congress. Even many zamindars favoured the Congress demand for swaraj. This they did even though Gandhiji had made it clear times without number that the Congress stood for the poor. This was also confirmed by the Karachi Congress in its resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme. Any doctrinaire socialist approach would have divided the forces working together for independence. Socialism would also raise the question of violence because at that time all socialists were Marxists. Further, it would have raised the controversy about "ends and means".

The difference between Jawaharlal and the so-called old leadership, however, continued. This came to a head at the Working Committee meeting held at Wardha in the last week of June. After the meeting Vallabhbhai, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji, Jairamdas, Jamnalal, Shankarrao and I sent in our resignation from the Working Committee to Jawaharlal. It would be of historical importance to give the correspondence that passed between the so-called old leadership and Jawaharlal and between Jawaharlal and Gandhiji. As the letters are rather lengthy, they are given in the appendices.*

For detailed correspondence, I would refer the reader to

* See Appendices VIII-XII.

Jawaharlal Nehru's *A Bunch of Old Letters*. Many people after independence have asked the present writer why he was opposed to some of Jawaharlal's policies as Prime Minister. These letters bring out to some extent the points of difference.

The results of the elections were declared in February 1937. The Congress got clear majorities in U.P., Bihar, Orissa, C.P. and Madras. In Bombay it secured nearly 50 per cent seats. With the support of a few more it would be in a position to form a ministry. In the N.-W.F.P. and Assam the Congress was the largest single group in the legislatures. The question arose whether the Congress should accept office under the limitations already mentioned. As there were two conflicting viewpoints, it was decided to hold a convention of the members of the Congress legislatures and members of the A.I.C.C. at Delhi in March 1937. Gandhiji's advice was in favour of accepting office. He wrote : "The boycott of the legislatures, let me tell you, is not an eternal principle like that of truth and non-violence. My opposition to them has lessened but that does not mean that I am going back on my former position. The question is of strategy and I can only say what is most needed at a particular moment."* Gandhiji also thought that by accepting office the Congress ministers would be in a position to implement extensively the nation-building constructive programmes which he had been propagating and working for since 1920. There was also some reluctance on his part to throw the country into the vortex of another satyagraha struggle. During the past two movements he had seen that his followers, including even his close associates, did not have that faith in non-violence which he desired. However, it was a fact that the country was full of discontent. Some channel was needed for them to express their pent-up feelings. Though the constitution fell far short of the Congress objective of complete independence it would be an experiment in democracy, however limited. An electorate of 30 millions would be involved and its ramifications would go much beyond and influence a larger number. He wrote that the new constitution could be construed as a "replacement of the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority and if the Congress worked the new constitution to achieve its goal

*Quoted in B. R. Nanda's *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 387.

of independence, it would avoid a bloody revolution and a mass civil disobedience movement".

At the convention Gandhiji's advice was accepted and it was decided that the Congress would form the ministries, provided the leaders of the Congress parties in the legislatures were satisfied and were able to state publicly that the Governors would not use their special powers and interfere in the day-to-day administration.

It would be interesting at this point to note the Government reaction. Reginald Maxwell, the then Home Secretary, prepared a document, which was 'an appreciation' of the political situation. In this he tried to belittle the success of the Congress in the elections. He also denied that the Congress success indicated that the people in general supported its aims and policies. He thought that if the Congress accepted office, it would be under the influence of the right wing.

He said that Gandhiji was steering the Congress step by step, cleverly adjusting right-wing and left-wing views. His assessment was : "In exercising his influence on the situation and trying to find a *via media* between the opposing views, Gandhi has probably tried to include something in the resolution to placate Nehru, and no doubt at the same time he is influenced by his usual desire to set up a negotiating point on which he would either be called upon to arbitrate in future between the Governors and their ministries or at any rate which would make it appear that the Government had to some extent yielded to Congress stipulations."*

The British bureaucracy in India was against giving any assurance as demanded by the Delhi convention. Lord Linlithgow, however, decided to make a conciliatory gesture by giving an assurance that the Governors would be anxious not only not to provoke conflict but also to avoid it. This did not effect any change in the language used in the constitution but it was felt that it helped. The Government had rightly gauged the mood of the country. They knew that the interim Governments in the provinces which they had installed in office after 1935 were bound to be voted out by the Congress on the day the legislatures met. After that, either the Congress had to take power or the constitution would be suspended. The Congress with a solid majority behind them in the provinces

Quoted in ***Mahatma Gandhi*** **by B. R. Nanda, p. 387.**

were not going to tolerate interference from the Governors. Lord Linlithgow, recognising the realities of the situation, had decided to make the above gesture.

Meanwhile, Gandhiji had also issued a statement to remove the misgivings of a section of Congressmen. He wrote that when he first read the 1935 Act he considered it to be unworkable but he had since changed his views. He now felt that the special powers of the Governor were to be used only in case of an emergency when there was a conflict between majority and minority groups or in a situation of violence. The way was now clear for the acceptance of office by the Congress.

On July 9, 1937 the first Congress ministry was formed in C.P. under Dr. N. B. Khare. Soon five other ministries were formed in U.P., Bihar, Orissa, Madras and Bombay. Subsequently Congress ministries were formed in Sind, Assam and the N.-W.F.P. In the working of the ministries the apprehensions of the Government and Nehru and his followers in the Congress were belied. The ministers were preoccupied with the social and economic programmes enunciated by the Congress which they were anxious to implement. The Governor also by and large adopted a co-operative attitude, though delicate situations would arise at times.

Gandhiji's main interest in the formation of the Congress ministries, as he said, was the implementation of the programme for the reconstruction of the country, a programme which had been accepted by the Congress and in which pioneer work had been done. He said that he would judge the efficiency of the Congress Governments by their ability to implement those reforms. He advised the ministers to lead a life of simplicity and wanted them to take a maximum salary of Rs. 500 per month. He thought that this amount was in keeping with the economic conditions in the country. He asked them to cultivate "industry, ability, integrity, impartiality and an infinite capacity for mastering details".* Work under the new ministries soon gained tempo. The old cadre of I.C.S. officers, of whom more than 50 per cent were British, found it difficult to adjust themselves to the new conditions, though some of them did try and succeed. On the whole, there was some change in the character of the administration. This not only aroused public

* Quoted in B. R. Nanda's *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 390.

expectations but also increased public demands at various levels which proved irksome to the European officers.

The two important reforms that the Congress ministries generally took up were prohibition and basic education. Gandhiji was deeply interested in both. However, basic education, though started with enthusiasm by the ministries, did not prosper because the diehard administrators in the education department did not understand the meaning or the spirit of the new system. In working it they twisted the system to such an extent that it got changed beyond recognition. In later years it lost its significance and naturally came in for much adverse criticism. The Congress Governments also took up with earnestness the reform of the tenancy laws and the abolition of untouchability. Prof. Coupland, assessing their work, said: "Taken as a whole, the record of the ministries was one in which the Congress could take reasonable pride. Its leaders had shown that they could act as well as talk, administer as well as agitate."* However, the contradictions in the situation were inherent and bound to give rise to trouble. The Central set-up was imperialistic and authoritarian. It had, as we have said, all the expanding sources of revenue. This made the work of carrying out any radical reforms difficult. Smooth working of the popular Governments depended much on the personal attitude of the Governor. The situation, therefore, varied in the provinces from near cordiality to a hostile reserve on either side. There was a possibility of conflict arising on any issue which the ministers might have considered as of basic importance while the Governor might have thought otherwise.

There was conflict in Bihar and U.P. over the release of political prisoners but it was smoothed over. The real danger of conflict, however, was with the Central Government. The Congress was opposed to and critical of many of its policies. Further, there was the problem of the Indian states. The people there were restive. They were denied basic civil liberties. The Congress could not be indifferent to the conflict arising there between the people and their rulers. The uneasy peace between the Government and the Congress could have lasted for some time more, had not the war intervened. England declared war on Hitler's Germany on September 3, 1939.

* Quoted in B. R. Nanda's *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 397.

# 23

# Unfortunate Episode

THE intervening period from 1934-39 was eventful for the Congress. The A.I.C.C. office so far had been peripatetic, moving from place to place with the annual change of the President. I thought that the work of the A.I.C.C. could be effectively performed if the location of the office did not change with every new President, but remained in one place. Motilal had, before his death, donated to the nation his residence at Allahabad. He had built a new house for himself in a portion of the compound. This now became the new 'Anand Bhavan' and the old house was called 'Swaraj Bhavan'. It had been confiscated during the 1930-34 movement. It was available now and I shifted there the A.I.C.C. office from Patna. Several departments were now added. Next year, when Jawaharlal became the President and I continued to be the General Secretary, some of the young socialists were inducted into the office. Among them were Dr. Lohia, Ashraf and Ahmed. Jayaprakash had been put in charge of Labour though he did not come to live in Allahabad.

During these years the so-called Leftists became more and more vocal and critical of Gandhiji. Subhas Bose was restive. He wanted a challenge to be immediately given to the Government on the issue of swaraj. Jawaharlal, though he sympathized with Subhas's views, was more cautious. He knew that any movement could succeed, only if it was led and organised by Gandhiji. If Gandhiji thought that the time was not ripe, Jawaharlal was

reluctantly prepared to wait. But the discontent of this younger section became more and more manifest in their open criticism of Gandhiji. Some of them went so far as to consider Gandhiji a reactionary and a friend of the capitalists and even of the imperialists. A highly critical pamphlet was issued by Jayaprakash against Gandhiji.

In 1938 Subhas Bose was elected President of the Congress, with Gandhiji's goodwill. But he and a group of so-called Leftists were not in tune with Gandhiji's principles and policies. However, as we have said earlier, they were not clear about what was to be done under the prevailing circumstances. They were opposed to what they called the old leadership which sometimes included even Jawaharlal.

However, in selecting members of the Working Committee Subhas did not deviate from the old pattern. It must be understood that all important decisions were taken by the Working Committee as a body. The President was the first among equals.

As the year 1938 was coming to a close, the question as to who should be the next President had to be decided. Subhas wanted a second term but Gandhiji had made it clear to him that he would not support him in this. Subhas was determined to stand again. His name had been proposed. The question of the next President was discussed by the Working Committee held in Bardoli. Subhas did not attend this meeting. Four candidates, whose names had been proposed by different provinces for the election of the next President, were Subhas, Maulana Azad, Vallabhbhai and Pattabhi. The Maulana wanted to withdraw his nomination but Gandhiji and others induced him not to do so. He acquiesced. Vallabhbhai thereupon withdrew his name. From Bardoli the Maulana went to Bombay and four days later he sent a letter of withdrawal from the contest. He gave no reason for changing his mind. Vallabhbhai having withdrawn from the contest, there remained only Subhas and Pattabhi in the field and the time for the nominations was past. We were conscious that Pattabhi was not a powerful candidate as against Subhas but it was decided that Gandhiji and other members of the Working Committee would support the former. This created a delicate and unique situation in the Congress. Since the time Gandhiji assumed leadership of the freedom fight,

the Congress President had been unanimously elected with his goodwill. Now, the organisation was divided into two groups. Intense canvassing went on on either side. Subhas, who was a very able organiser, had during the term of his office quietly been working for his re-election.

He won the election. On his re-election, those members of the Working Committee who had backed Pattabhi thought it proper to submit their resignations. They sent a joint letter of resignation to Subhas. Jawaharlal submitted his resignation in a separate letter. He did not want to be identified with the members of the old Working Committee. Subhas promptly accepted my resignation, while the other resignations were kept pending. I was the General Secretary. He immediately ordered one of the clerks to take charge of the office from me, although Sadiq Ali was the Office Secretary. It may be that Subhas did not know the working of the office. During his term he came to Allahabad to meet Jawaharlal and was his guest. During this visit he went round the office for about half an hour. That was all the contact he had with the office.*

The plenary session of the Congress began in Tripuri, a village in C.P. The President-elect came there but he was ill at that time. During the session he had to lie down on a sofa and conduct the proceedings. One of the resolutions proposed and passed was that the President should appoint his Working Committee in consultation with Gandhiji.

* I have since read *A Bunch of Old Letters* published by Jawaharlal. In one of his letters to Subhas he writes that the A.I.C.C. was not functioning properly during his first term of office. Subhas rightly throws the blame for this on me. Since I became the General Secretary of the Congress, all the work of the organisation was conducted by the A.I.C.C. office. If the General Secretary had any doubt on a point, he would refer the matter to the President. At this time the learned doctors whom I have mentioned above and whom Jawaharlal had himself inducted into the A.I.C.C. office were helping me in my work. This should have made for more efficiency than when I was working alone. Subhas also points out that the General Secretary, *i.e.*, I, was thrust on him. I have no knowledge of this, but it may be true. It is clear from the correspondence exchanged between Subhas and Jawaharlal that the former wanted a secretary of his own choice to function with him from Calcutta. This would have meant the shifting of the office there. The members of the Working Committee may not have liked to disturb the existing arrangements and revert to the old practice of the A.I.C.C. office shifting with every new President.

This resolution, I believe, was a brain-wave of Rajaji. Gandhiji was not present at Tripuri. He had not been consulted. He never accepted the commission thrust on him without his consent. This, I believed then as I believe today, was a wrong decision. Subhas resented it and was unable to announce the names of members of his executive. Jawaharlal at that time had left on a trip to China. Gandhiji had publicly announced that he would not make any suggestion to Subhas about the personnel of his Working Committee.

A meeting of the A.I.C.C. was called at Calcutta to take stock of the situation created by the resolution which was passed at Tripuri and to find a way out of the impasse. The members who had resigned from the Working Committee could not possibly join the new executive. Apart from the fact that they had resigned from the Working Committee as soon as it was announced that Subhas was re-elected President, they were also unable to join as they found that they differed from Subhas in certain vital matters. Letters and telegrams were exchanged between Subhas and Gandhiji about the formation of the Working Committee. In his last letter addressed to Subhas from Sodepore, Gandhiji wrote : "Knowing your own views and knowing how you and most of the members differ in fundamentals it seems to me that if I gave you names it would be an imposition on you." After receiving this letter which confirmed the position taken by the old members of the Working Committee, Subhas thought it best to resign. The pity of it was that most of the socialists and radicals who had supported his re-election were no more with him.

Rajendra Babu was elected President for the rest of the term. Vallabhbhai did not attend this meeting. It was wise of him. The proceedings of the A.I.C.C. were tumultuous. Some angry delegates as well as visitors from Bengal violently expressed their resentment. Rajendra Babu and I were abused and mobbed by them as we left the pandal. The whole episode was unfortunate and left a bad taste in the mouth. Subhas formed a separate party, the Forward Bloc, outside the Congress.

# 24

# Bewildered and Agonised

DURING these years the attitude of Jinnah and his Muslim followers had hardened. They got more and more alienated from the Congress. The Muslim League had fared very badly in the elections. They had secured hardly 5 per cent even of Muslim votes in the Congress-dominated provinces. The Muslims who joined the Congress ministries were either Congressmen or those who later joined the Congress legislature parties.

Jinnah who had gone away to England for some time had returned to India before the 1937 elections. He was deeply disappointed with the performance of the League in the elections. He now began to re-organise it with full vigour and to give it a popular mass base which it lacked. One of the League's tactics was to set afloat rumours of discrimination against the Muslims by the Congress Governments. They were either false or based on half-truths but this excited communal passions and helped to bring more Muslims under the League banner.

In pursuance of this technique was published the notorious Pirpur Report purporting to be a catalogue of the tyrannies and injustices inflicted on the Muslims in the Congress-governed provinces. This report later was responsible for causing widespread communal riots. In 1938 there was a riot in Bombay, which had so far been free of communal friction. The people there were more interested in making money than fighting each other. The police had to open fire, and 2,000 persons, mostly Hindus, were arrested though it was a

Congress-governed province. Reacting to this, the Hindu communal parties whipped up their propaganda. They were bitterly critical of Gandhiji and the Congress. They thought the latter were pandering to Muslim intransigence and were betraying Hindu interests.

Jinnah now went a step further and questioned the utility of a democratic set-up in the country. He started advocating the two-nation theory. In a surprising speech in Karachi in 1938 he compared the Muslims to the Sudeten Germans and said, "Only those succeed with the British people who possess force and power and who are in a position to bully them." By 1940 Jinnah succeeded in his mission and the Muslim League officially accepted the two-nation theory. It declared that no constitution would be acceptable to it unless it was based on the demarcation of the Muslim majority areas in the east and the west. What in the beginning seemed to be the wild and irresponsible talk of some frustrated communalists now appeared before the country as a serious threat for its vivisection. Gandhiji recoiled against this idea. His soul was in travail. All his life-long work appeared to be obliterated. He never accepted the contention that religious differences stood in the way of two communities working for the freedom of their motherland. He thought the cultural and social life of the two communities differed not so much on communal lines as on regional and linguistic lines. The Hindus and Muslims of a region group were closer to each other than their counterparts in the other provinces. He refused to accept the anachronistic theory that change of religion could be the basis for a change of nationality. At this turn of events, in bewilderment and anguish, Gandhiji said, "Vivisect me before you vivisect India."*

The idea of separate States gained additional strength with the outbreak of the war in Europe. When the Congress ministries resigned in 1939, Jinnah and the Muslim League celebrated this as a 'Day of Deliverance'. They were now absolutely free to give currency to blatantly false stories of communal oppression and discrimination perpetrated by the Congress ministries. There was no one on the Government side to check or protest against this

* Quoted in B. R. Nanda's *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 411.

false and sinister propaganda because the British Government was now keen to woo the Muslim League and raise it as a counterpoise against the Congress. But for the war the separatist ideology may not have been projected so powerfully and advanced with such quick tempo as to result in the partition of the country and consequent suffering and bloodshed.

# 25

# Rajkot

DURING February and March 1939, Gandhiji got involved in the Rajkot episode. With the coming of the Congress ministries into power, the popular leaders in the Indian states had intensified their agitation for constitutional reforms. The Congress had so far given them moral support. There were struggles in Mysore, Travancore, Jaipur and Hyderabad. There was also an agitation in Rajkot, Gandhiji's early home, led by the Sardar. Gandhiji felt personally concerned in what was happening. The Thakore had agreed to appoint a commission with a majority of nationalists on it to go into the question of constitutional reforms. But later, having secured the backing of other rulers, he went back on his word. His evil genius was his Dewan Veerawala, a clever intriguer. Gandhiji sent Kasturba to court arrest in Rajkot in early February. He himself reached there on February 27, 1939 on a peace mission. Having studied the situation he wrote to the Thakore Saheb of his intention to go on a fast on March 3. This alarmed not only his friends and physicians, but also his wife who was in jail. On March 3, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy asking him to intervene. At his intervention the Chief Justice of India arbitrated and his judgment went in favour of the people justifying the contention of Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai. A settlement was effected on March 7, and political prisoners were released. Gandhiji gave up his fast. The Thakore Saheb made concessions and again went back upon some of them. Thus the ultimate gain was not much. Gandhiji

was unhappy about the episode because he thought he had done wrong in seeking the intervention of the Viceroy which, according to him, vitiated his satyagraha and made it into a coercive act. He, therefore, himself relinquished the few concessions made by the Thakore.

Sometimes, Gandhiji made such subtle distinctions that it was not possible to follow his arguments. When he appealed to the Viceroy to intervene, he was only appealing to a higher authority having jurisdiction in the matter. It is hard to understand wherein violence came in such an appeal. Moreover, the concessions made were after an impartial judicial inquiry. No violence was involved in this. One fails to understand why Gandhiji gave up the few concessions made by the Thakore Saheb. These were not given to oblige him but were made in favour of the people.

# 26

# Individual Satyagraha Launched

ON the day England declared war on Germany, the Viceroy, on behalf of India, did the same without consulting any Indian. The general feeling in the nation was that one man, a foreigner, had plunged 400 million people into war without even making a show of ascertaining their views. This was imperialism in the most naked form. The Congress had, on several occasions, declared that India would refuse to be dragged into any war waged by England without her consent.

On the day following, in an interview with the Viceroy in Simla, Gandhiji told him that his own sympathies were with Britain and France from a purely humanitarian point of view. The Working Committee of the Congress, meeting in an emergency session at Wardha on September 14, 1939, declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate itself with the free nations for mutual defence against aggression. It, therefore, invited the British Government *to declare in unequivocal terms their war aims and their views about democracy and, in particular, how these were to apply to India during the war period and after.* Gandhiji was of the view that whatever support was to be given to the British Government should be given unconditionally. But he felt that the Congress, as a national organisation, had a perfect right to put the British declarations to the test. He commended the Congress resolution

to the public and hoped that the Working Committee's offer to the Government would receive the unanimous support of all the parties and would be accepted by the Government. This was against his non-violent approach. But he did it, as he said, in the "faith that the departure of the Congress from the path of non-violence will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary".

In his interview with the Viceroy on September 26, 1939, Gandhiji pleaded for the acceptance of the Congress resolution. The Viceroy's reply was that England could not yet define her war aims. As for an assurance of freedom, all that could be promised was "consultation at some future date with the ultimate goal of Dominion Status".

The Working Committee's reaction to this was the decision not to participate in the war effort. They also instructed all the Congress ministries in the provinces to resign. The Government thereafter, instead of dissolving the legislatures and ordering fresh elections, imposed Governor's rule in the provinces.

The Congress held its annual session at Ramgarh in Bihar in March 1940 and resolved that the legitimate demand of the Congress having been refused, civil disobedience was the only course left. It was recognised that the struggle would inevitably have to be under Gandhiji's leadership. Gandhiji accepted the leadership and, as was usual with him, told Congressmen: "As soldiers, we have to take our orders from the General and obey them implicitly. His word must be law. I am your General."

In May 1940, the German attack on its neighbours in Europe burst in all its fury. Hitler overran Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium. France surrendered. German armies occupied the Channel ports on the mainland, threatening England with invasion. At this stage of the war Gandhiji wrote in *Harijan* on June 1, 1940 : "We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin." All talk of civil disobedience by the Congress was, therefore, dropped and another attempt was made to arrive at a settlement with the Government. The Working Committee met at Wardha on June 18 and decided to go one step further. It dropped its demand for the definition of the Allies' war aims. It made a fresh offer of full co-operation subject only to recognition of India's claim to complete

independence after the war and the immediate establishment of a National Government.

Gandhiji was opposed to the Congress agreeing to undertake responsibility for a violent war effort. He, therefore, asked to be absolved of all responsibility for the programme, which might be adopted in future by the Congress. The Working Committee agreed to leave him free to pursue his ideal of non-violence in his own way. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan resigned from the Working Committee in protest against this sanction of violence by the Congress. Rajendra Babu, Prafulla, Shankarrao and I too wanted to resign on this issue, but Gandhiji said that we must not divide the Working Committee at that stage. The case of Ghaffar Khan, he said, was different. We also believed that in any case the Government was not going to accept the conditional offer of help from the Congress. We, therefore, saw no reason to press our resignation at that time. Even afterwards throughout the war the question of our resigning from the Working Committee did not arise, as the repeated offers of help in the war effort made by the Congress were spurned by the Government.

On June 29, the Viceroy had another consultation with Gandhiji. His fresh proposals included expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and offer of dominion status at the end of the war. The Working Committee considered this offer at its meeting in Delhi of July 7. Their resolution asked for an unequivocal declaration of complete independence at the end of the war and immediate setting up of a Provisional National Government at the Centre which would command the confidence of all the elected members of the Central Legislature. On the acceptance of these terms, the Congress offered its co-operation in the war effort.

The Working Committee's resolution was confirmed by the A.I.C.C. at its Poona session on July 27-28. This was duly sent to the authorities. The Viceroy's response to this was an offer to set up a War Advisory Council. Even this was counter-balanced by the assurance to the Muslim and other minorities that Great Britain would not transfer power to any Indian Government "whose authority was denied" by "large and powerful elements of the population". This meant veto on India's political future given to the minorities.

The Working Committee met again at Wardha on August 22 and rejected the new offer. The Congress was thus again obliged to seek Gandhiji's leadership.

The All India Congress Committee met in Bombay on September 15, 1940 and, not wanting to hamper the Allies' war effort, decided as advised by Gandhiji, to launch individual civil disobedience. It had to be under his guidance. The issue was limited to one of freedom of speech to express and propagate views on a war into which India had been dragged without its consent and in the conduct of which people had no say.

On October 17, 1940, accordingly, Gandhiji launched his civil disobedience campaign on individual basis with Vinoba Bhave as the first satyagrahi. Persons desiring to offer civil disobedience were selected by Gandhiji from amongst the lists sent by the Provincial Congress Committees. As General Secretary I helped him in the selection. For this purpose the camp office of the A.I.C.C. was opened at Sevagram. As a gesture of goodwill, nobody offered satyagraha at Christmas time. The movement continued through 1940 to the close of 1941. After a few months when the jails were full, the Government refused to arrest those who spoke against participation of India in the war effort.

In the meantime the war having taken a menacing turn on December 14, 1941, the Government expanded the Viceroy's Executive Council. A number of Indians, considered by them as eminent, were invited to join it. The bulk of the leaders and other Congressmen in jail were released. As the majority of Congress leaders were thinking of making a fresh offer of co-operation in the war effort, Gandhiji again requested the Working Committee to relieve him of his command. His wishes were respected and he was relieved of his charge by the Working Committee at its meeting held in Bardoli on December 23.

The Bardoli Resolution was confirmed by the A.I.C.C. at its meeting held in Wardha on January 15, 1942. During the course of his speech the Maulana, in justification of the Congress offer to help the war effort provided the British Government agreed to establish immediately a National Government, said in effect that the Congress could not rise to the absolute requirements of non-violence, possible only to a Mahatma. Replying to this, Gandhiji

said : "I was not a little perturbed when the Maulana raised me sky-high. I do not live in the air. I am of the earth, earthy. I have never been on an aeroplane. I am like you, an ordinary mortal made of common clay. Had that not been the case, we should not have been able to work together these twenty years. Ahimsa with me is a creed and the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before anyone except in casual informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political method, but it does not on that account lose its political character. I tried it for the first time in South Africa, after I found that all the so-called constitutional remedies, with which Congress work in India had made me familiar, had failed. The question there was exclusively of the political existence of Indians who had settled in South Africa as merchants, petty hawkers, etc. It was for them a question of life and death, and it was in dealing with it that this method of non-violence came to me. The various measures that I adopted there were not the work of a visionary or a dreamer. They were the work of an essentially practical man dealing with practical political questions. As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered, even given up in preference to another. If, therefore, I say to you that our policy should not be given up today, I am talking political wisdom. It is political insight. It has served us in the past, it has enabled us to cover many stages towards independence, and it is as a politician that I suggest to you that it is a grave mistake to contemplate its abandonment. If I have carried the Congress with me all these years, it is in my capacity as a politician. It is hardly fair to describe my method as religious because it is new." I have quoted this long passage in full, as it clearly indicates Gandhiji's position in the Indian political field apart from his personal religious beliefs.

It was at this meeting that Gandhiji talked of Jawaharlal as his political heir. He said Jawaharlal had been opposing him in life but after his death he would speak his language. Whether Jawaharlal spoke Gandhiji's language after his death is for history to decide. As for his being heir to Gandhiji, this has been often misunderstood. It had nothing to do with the Prime Ministership of India. Gandhiji himself not being Prime Minister could not have named a successor for that position. What he meant was that Jawaharlal would carry

on the struggle for the attainment of the independence of India after him. Somewhere Jawaharlal himself has given this interpretation of what Gandhiji meant by the word 'heir'. Nobody at that time expected that India would be free without further struggles. As we shall see later, Gandhiji after his release was contemplating at least one more struggle against Britain before his death.

On December 7, 1941, Japan struck at Pearl Harbour. Hong Kong fell. Java, Sumatra and other islands of the Dutch East Indies were occupied and Malaya was overrun. On March 7, Rangoon was seized by the Japanese. Everywhere the Western Imperial Governments retreated before the onrush of the Japanese armed forces. Their civil administration collapsed. The European personnel, civil and military, fled in panic. Even under the impact of these military reverses Churchill, who had declared that he had not become "the King's First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire", said in one of his speeches that the Atlantic Charter's self-government clause did not apply to India. The Atlantic Charter had been drawn up and agreed to by the Allied powers earlier. However, hard pressed by Chiang Kai-shek,* President Roosevelt and the Labour Members in Churchill's war-time coalition Government, he was obliged to send Stafford Cripps to India to negotiate a settlement with the Indian leaders. But the instructions given to him were such as would render his mission foredoomed to failure.

* Chiang Kai-shek had earlier visited India and met Gandhiji, Jawaharlal and other Congress leaders.

# 27

# Cripps Mission

THE Declaration, which Cripps brought with him in 1942, was to the effect that immediately on the termination of the war, a constitution-making body would be set up for the purpose of framing a new constitution for India on the basis of the electorate of 1935. Indian states would be invited to appoint representatives in proportion to their population with the same powers. His Majesty's Government would accept and implement the constitution framed by this body, subject to the signing of a treaty "negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty would provide safeguards for the protection of racial and religious minorities in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government".

The promise of dominion status in the future was hemmed in with a provision that an Indian state or a province could keep out of the future union, in which case a separate constitution would be prepared for such a unit. It would be given a status comparable to that of the Indian Union. In the meantime a provisional Indian Government would be formed, though Defence would remain the exclusive prerogative of the British Commander-in-Chief.

After Gandhiji saw these proposals, he told Cripps, when he met him on March 27: "Why have you come with such proposals? I would advise you to go back home by the first available plane." Gandhiji objected to the proposals principally on these grounds:

(1) The proposals envisaged the possibility of dividing India into three segments.
(2) Under the scheme, ministers would not be responsible for the defence of the country.
(3) What was promised was dominion status, not independence.
(4) A veto was being given to the minorities.

Of course, his personal objection to military aid being given to Britain remained.

However, the Working Committee, though it recognised the validity of the points raised by Gandhiji, did not want to break off the negotiations. They wanted to get from Cripps further elucidation. On this, Gandhiji said that as the Working Committee was willing to co-operate with the British Government in terms of military war effort, he could not be a party to the negotiations. He therefore proceeded to Wardha, leaving the Working Committee free to carry on the talks.

The Committee felt that the proposals would fail to inspire the people with any enthusiasm for the war effort. This was their main concern in view of the impending Japanese threat. They were prepared to leave the actual conduct of military operations to the Commander-in-Chief, but felt that political control should be exercised by a representative Indian. As no such assurance was forthcoming, the Working Committee adopted a resolution on April 2, rejecting the Draft Declaration.

Immediately on receiving this resolution, Cripps got into touch with London, and on April 7, placed before the Indian leaders a new proposal on behalf of his Government. It was to the effect that the Commander-in-Chief should have a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as "War Minister". He should retain full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India. A representative Indian member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which could be separated from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department. On examining the list of the subjects proposed to be transferred to the Indian Defence Member, it was found that it would reduce him to a sort of "odds-and-ends man" for the army. The new proposals were not acceptable to the Congress.

However, the Working Committee in their eagerness to take their "due share in the defence of democracy" thought that "a more liberal approach" was possible. A resolution was drafted which stipulated that the Defence Department should be placed in charge of a representative Indian, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war should be exercised during its duration by the Commander-in-Chief, who would be an extraordinary member of the National Cabinet. Thus, according to the Congress leaders, the National Government was to be responsible for the "entire Government of the country, including Defence".

In reply to this Cripps sent an amended formula in which, while adopting the general outline of the Congress Working Committee's proposals, he defined the functions of the War Minister by appending a description of his functions. This was so insignificant that the Congress Working Committee asked for an illustrative list of the functions of the War Minister and the Commander-in-Chief, respectively. As no such list was forthcoming, Azad and Nehru saw Cripps on April 9. On their asking him for an illustrative list he referred them to the list for the Defence Department which he had previously sent, adding that certain "residuary subjects" might be added later. But he had to admit that substantially there would be no difference between the old list and any new one that might be prepared. There was no room now left for the search of a new formula. Also, at first in his talks with the Congress leaders and in his public statements Cripps had referred to a "National Government" consisting of "Ministers" which would function as a "Cabinet", the Viceroy occupying the same position as the King of England. However, in the interview on April 9, Cripps talked about the "Viceroy's Executive Council". "We cannot change laws," he said. Asked if through convention the popular representatives would be able to function as a Cabinet, he answered: "I am totally unable to say anything on the subject because it is completely within the discretion of the Viceroy. Go to him later and discuss the matter with him. I cannot interfere or indicate what should be done." Besides, he added, the members had always the remedy of "resigning or threatening to resign". This change of attitude surprised the members of the Working Committee. Therefore, in his letter of April 10, 1942 the President informed

Cripps that the Congress could not enter the Government without the minimum power that was necessary for the proper discharge of their responsibilities.

Cripps replied on the next day. "A truly National Government" which must be a "Cabinet with full powers" was not possible "without constitutional changes of a most complicated character" and this on "a very large scale" would be objected to by all the minorities in India. In a country such as India, where communal divisions were still so deep, "an irresponsible majority Government such as proposed by the Congress leaders would be inconsistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of those minorities". The Congress President wrote back the same day expressing his surprise. "The whole picture which you sketched before us has now been completely shattered by what you told us at our last interview." Cripps on this wrote a conciliatory and even flattering letter to Jawaharlal, saying: "Upon [you] rests the great burden of decision....It is the moment for supreme courage of a great leader to face all the risks and all the difficulties....I know your qualities....I beg of you to make use of them now." He was scarcely prepared for Jawaharlal's reply that there were limits beyond which he could not carry the Congress and there were limits beyond which the Congress could not carry the people. It is also strange that even a socialist like Cripps should have trotted out the plea of religious minorities to be satisfied before any real political power was to be transferred to the people of India.*

The talks which had opened with great expectations—though Gandhiji had none—ended with bitter disillusionment. What was the reason for the failure of the Cripps Mission? The Working Committee's diagnosis was that "a big change had occurred in the middle". It would appear that Linlithgow's Government was dead opposed to any real transfer of power. This once again proved that not the authorities in England but the men on the spot had to decide the fate of India. It was so up to the last, as we shall see. On April 12, 1942, Cripps was recalled.

On his return, he accused Gandhiji of having sabotaged his

* It would be interesting to note that the Cripps proposals foreshadowed the division of India if the minorities were not satisfied. This amounted to a veto given to the minorities.

effort by sending a telephonic message from Sevagram that the proposals were "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank". This statement Gandhiji denied as "a tissue of lies". But few Englishmen would admit that they or their Government ever acted with any other motives than those of justice and even of philanthropy! The Englishman is never wrong!

# 28

# Quit India

A FEELING of deep frustration, anger and resentment swept all over the country following the failure of the Cripps Mission. This was aggravated by the tales of woe that the Indian refugees from Burma brought as they trekked their way to India. About this the resolution, passed at the Allahabad session of the All India Congress Committee, said:

"It [the A.I.C.C.] has noted with indignation the arrangements made for and the treatment accorded to evacuees and refugees from Malaya and Burma to India. The officials, whose business and duty it was to protect the lives and interests of the people in their respective areas, utterly failed to discharge that responsibility and, running away from their post of duty, sought safety for themselves, leaving the vast majority of the people wholly uncared and unprovided for. Such arrangements for evacuation as were made were meant principally for the European population and at every step racial discrimination was in evidence. Because of this and also because of the utter incompetence, callousness and selfishness of those in authority, vast numbers of Indians in Malaya and Burma have not only lost all they possessed but have also undergone unimaginable sufferings, many dying on the way from lack of the necessities of life, from disease, or from attacks from anti-social elements.

"Racial discrimination was shown at the base camps in Burma where special arrangements were made for Europeans and Anglo-Burmans, while Indians were left almost uncared for; in the matter

of according of special facilities for transport and travel to the Europeans and Eurasians; and in the general treatment given to Indians and non-Indians along the route and at the various camps. In particular, this was in evidence in the scandal of a safer and more convenient route being practically reserved for non-Indians, while Indians were forced to travel by a longer, more difficult and more dangerous route."

In apprehension of Japanese invasion of India, tens of thousands of boats, bullock carts and even cycles of the people were seized or destroyed in Bengal and Assam and the eastern borders. Also, standing crops were destroyed. All this was done in pursuance of a scorched earth policy. It deprived vast masses of people of their means of livelihood. Prices were rising and the country was facing famine conditions. The authorities showed callous unconcern and did nothing to mitigate the sufferings of the people. In their panic they ordered evacuation at short notice of whole villages and requisitioned people's houses without giving due compensation or providing alternative accommodation for their rehabilitation. It was also known that preparations were being made for large-scale withdrawals from Assam, Bengal and the coastal areas of Orissa. Secret instructions were issued for the removal of records to safer places in the interior. There was no desire to fight the enemy. Further plans were made for the evacuation of Madras, Calcutta and even Delhi. The Deputy Chief of the General Staff was reported to have said that in the event of Japanese invasion of India, the British forces would not be able to defend the whole of India and might have to retire to a remote line of defence beyond Allahabad. Yet such was the British distrust of the Indians that, far from providing arms to the people, the authorities would not allow even volunteer corps to be organised for self-protection. The conclusion was forced upon the people and their leaders that the British were more afraid of handing over India to Indians than to the Japanese even as they and other Imperial powers had done in the case of their possessions in South-East Asia. Under these circumstances neither the leaders nor the people knew how to face this tragic situation.

Gandhiji however was never resourceless. He saw that the leaders could give no relief to the people in their dire distress. The

people in their desperation and anger against the British might welcome the Japanese as liberators. This is what they had done elsewhere in the East. Under these circumstances Gandhiji thought that the only honourable course for the British was to effect an orderly withdrawal from India, leaving it to its people or in the alternative "to anarchy or to God". However, a free India might be able to mobilise its strength against the Japanese menace. Short of this, there was no possibility of resisting the Japanese attack. To the people and the Congress leaders he presented the outline of a plan to meet the menace of Japanese invasion through total non-co-operation. The Working Committee was to meet in Allahabad on April 27, 1942 to take stock of the new situation and devise means to face it. Gandhiji sent through Mirabehn a draft resolution in Hindustani which might form the basis of their resolution to be placed before the A.I.C.C. A literal translation of the draft reads thus :

"Whereas the British War Cabinet's proposals, sponsored by Sir Stafford Cripps, have shown up British imperialism in its nakedness as never before, the A.I.C.C. has come to the following conclusions :

"The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that Britain is incapable of defending India. It is natural that whatever she does is for her own defence. There is an eternal conflict between Indian and British interests. It follows that their notions of defence would also differ. The British Government have no trust in India's political parties. The Indian army has been maintained up till now mainly to hold India in subjugation. It has been completely segregated from the general population who can in no sense regard it as their own. This policy of mistrust still continues and is the reason why national defence is not entrusted to India's elected representatives.

"Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people. It was purely a British act. If India were free, her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan. The Congress is of opinion that if the British withdrew from India, India would be able to defend herself in the event of Japanese or any aggressor attacking India.

"The A.I.C.C. is, therefore, of opinion that the British should withdraw from India. The plea that they should remain in India for protecting the Indian princes is wholly untenable. It is additional proof of their determination to maintain their hold over India. The princes need have no fear from unarmed India.

"The question of majority and minority is a creation of the British Government and would disappear on their withdrawal.

"For all these reasons the Committee appeals to Britain for the sake of her own safety, for the sake of India's safety and for the cause of world peace to let go her hold on India even if she does not give up all Asiatic and African possessions.

"This Committee desires to assure the Japanese Government and people that India bears no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation. India only desires freedom from an alien domination. But in this fight for freedom the Committee is of opinion that India, while welcoming universal sympathy, does not stand in need of foreign military aid. India will attain her freedom through her non-violent strength and will retain it likewise. Therefore, the Committee hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India. But if Japan attacks India and Britain makes no response to its appeal, the Committee would expect all those who look to the Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the Japanese forces and not render any assistance to them. It is no part of the duty of those who are attacked to render any assistance to the attacker. It is their duty to offer complete non-co-operation.

"It is not difficult to understand the simple principle of non-violent non-co-operation :

1. We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders.

2. We may not look to him for any favours nor fall to his bribes. But we may not bear him any malice nor wish him ill.

3. If he wishes to take possession of our fields, we will refuse to give them up even if we have to die in the effort to resist him.

4. If he is attacked by disease or is dying of thirst and seeks our aid, we may not refuse it.

5. In such places where the British and Japanese forces are fighting, our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary.

"At present our non-co-operation with the British Government is limited. Were we to offer them complete non-co-operation when they are actually fighting, it would be tantamount to placing our country deliberately in Japanese hands. Therefore, not to put any obstacle in the way of the British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our non-co-operation with the Japanese. Neither may we assist the British in any active manner. If we can judge from their recent attitude, the British Government do not need any help from us beyond our non-interference. They desire our help only as slaves—a position we can never accept.

"It is necessary for the Committee to make a clear declaration in regard to the scorched earth policy. If, in spite of our non-violent resistance, any part of the country falls into Japanese hands we may not destroy our crops, water supply, etc., if only because it will be our endeavour to regain them. The destruction of war material is another matter and may under certain circumstances be a military necessity. But it can never be the Congress policy to destroy what belongs or is of use to the masses.

"Whilst non-co-operation against the Japanese forces will necessarily be limited to a comparatively small number and must succeed if it is complete and genuine, the true building up of Swaraj consists in the millions of India whole-heartedly working the constructive programme. Without it the whole nation cannot rise from its age-long torpor. Whether the British remain or not, it is our duty always to wipe out unemployment, to bridge the gulf between rich and poor, to banish communal strife, to exorcise the demon of untouchability, to reform dacoits and save the people from them. If crores of people do not take a living interest in this nation-building work, freedom must remain a dream and unattainable by either non-violence or violence."

A resolution based on Gandhiji's draft was unanimously passed by the Working Committee. However, on the next day, the Maulana said that this resolution must be materially altered. It was pointed out to him that it was unanimously passed and he had not objected to it then. His reply was that, unless it was changed, he would resign. Seeing the attitude of the Maulana, Jawaharlal and Pant changed their minds. Others reluctantly consented to cancel the resolution passed on the previous day. They felt that the resignation

by the Maulana at that time would complicate matters. It would be exploited by our internal opponents and the foreign government. A new draft was prepared and accepted. It was kept before the A.I.C.C. which met from April 29 to May 2, 1942 and was passed. In the altered resolution the operative part of Gandhiji's draft asking the British to withdraw was omitted.*

At this session, Rajaji's resolution that the Congress should come to an understanding with the Muslim League by accepting in principle the division of India was rejected by an overwhelming majority.**

Gandhiji however continued to keep his ideas before the public through the columns of *Harijan*. There was no change in the situation of utter helplessness created by the Government. The members of the Working Committee thought that they had to give some lead to the country if the Japanese invasion was not to be welcomed by large sections of the population. A meeting of the Working Committee was therefore called at Wardha. It met from July 7 to 14, 1942. At this meeting Gandhiji explained his idea of the peaceful withdrawal of the British Government and the reasons therefor. After a good deal of discussion it was found that only a bare majority of the members of the Working Committee agreed with Gandhiji's idea. Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal, Pant, Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali did not agree for good reasons. They thought that the British Government would not consent to withdraw and any satyagraha movement would be misunderstood by the other Allies, particularly China, America and Russia. British propaganda would misrepresent the Congress as being friendly to the Japanese. They would also misrepresent that the Congress was out to disorganise India's forced war effort. Gandhiji gave due weight to these arguments, and pertinently asked what the Congress programme would then be to meet the situation. The British Government was not ready to negotiate with the Congress

* I record the episode for historical reasons. I must also record that when I related this episode to Gandhiji, he said, "You should have allowed the Maulana to resign."

** It was never made clear by Rajaji whether he wanted the two parts to constitute separate sovereign states. He did want some connection but its nature was never made clear. It was perhaps this vagueness that made Jinnah talk disparagingly of him when he and Gandhiji met in 1944.

and the internal conditions were deteriorating. They could render no help to the distressed people. The dissenting members also could suggest nothing for the defence of India against the impending Japanese attack. Gandhiji came to their help. He said that he could understand the hesitation of some important members of the Committee to commit their respectable organisation to the hazardous plan of action proposed by him. In that case he said that he would go it alone. The Congress could, however, pass a resolution to the effect that such Congressmen and others, who agreed with Gandhiji's plan of action, should help him by joining his satyagraha movement.

This led to a prolonged discussion. The arguments that Gandhiji advanced in favour of his position were irrefutable. Also, the idea that they would have to part company with their leader at such a critical and delicate time was not easy to contemplate. Gandhiji at last convinced Jawaharlal that what he proposed was the only way to meet the situation created by the obstinacy of the Imperial Government, which was ready to lose India to the Japanese rather than do the right thing even in its hour of the greatest peril. The other members also withdrew their opposition and what came to be known as the 'Quit India' resolution was unanimously passed.*

In brief, the resolution expressed the concern of the Congress at the rapidly deteriorating situation in the country. It apprehended that the callous, oppressive and intransigent attitude of the British Government had angered the people to such an extent that they might even welcome the invading forces as liberators. The Congress had so far "studiously followed the policy of non-em-

* Though the resolution was unanimously passed, I have an idea that some of the dissenting members had mental reservations. At least in one instance this was made abundantly clear. Dr. Mahmud from Ahmednagar Fort, after some time, wrote a letter to the Viceroy stating, among other things, that he had been against the resolution and had resigned from the Working Committee. On this he was released. I, as General Secretary, knew nothing about his resignation. Maulana Azad in his book, *India Wins Freedom* (p. 96), says about this incident: "I later came to know the real reason, but after the lapse of so many years I do not think it necessary to go into the details of this unhappy incident." From the perusal of this book it seems the Maulana himself had not wholeheartedly accepted the 'Quit India' resolution. This was also clear from the discussions we had at the Ahmednagar Fort, of which we shall have occasion to talk later.

*contd.*

barrassment" because of their sympathy for the Allied cause. The resolution continued: "The Cripps Mission having failed, the only course left was to demand the withdrawal of British rule from India. This would enable the country to mobilise popular support and organize resistance against the menace of Japanese aggression." The Congress appealed to the Government to accede to this reasonable demand which was being made not only in the interest of India but "also that of Britain and the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their adherence". "In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war, or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increase pressure on China by the Japanese or any other power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the Allied Powers. The Congress is, therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression, and to protect and help China. In the event of the British Government failing to respond to the appeal for the withdrawal of the British from India, the Congress would launch a widespread non-violent movement under the leadership of Gandhiji."

Further, it was decided to call a meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay on August 7 to consider the resolution.

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The Maulana in his book (p. 75) also says that his opposition to the 'Quit India' resolution was only partially understood by Jawaharlal. He continues: "....the other members were generally content to follow Gandhiji's lead. Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani had no clear idea about the war. They rarely tried to judge things on their own, and in any case they were accustomed to subordinate their judgment to Gandhiji. As such, discussion with them was almost useless." The Maulana's opinion about Rajendra Babu and me may be correct, but to think that the Sardar uncritically followed Gandhiji is something that few who knew him would believe. My experience during those years was that we followed Gandhiji after understanding him, maybe through faith in his superior judgment. This is also a recognised way of learning and understanding. Some others had to follow Gandhiji without faith in his superior judgment and even intellectual understanding. I wish that we, the blind followers, had followed Gandhiji's lead upto the last. If only we had done that, our country would not have been 'vivisected'.

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The Bombay meeting of the A.I.C.C. confirmed the Wardha resolution. It again emphasised its salient features. It added: "The provisional government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government, representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with the allied powers.... The provisional government will evolve a scheme for a constituent assembly which will prepare a constitution for the governance of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution...should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in those units." Also, a world federation of free nations was proposed. To begin with, it would naturally consist of the Allied nations.

The 'Quit India' resolution of August 8 was moved by Jawaharlal, seconded by the Sardar and supported by other leaders. It was passed amidst scenes of great enthusiasm. In his concluding speech Gandhiji, among other things, said: "God has vouchsafed

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I do not want to enter into the controversy, about which Pyarelalji has already written, that Gandhiji wrote a letter to the Maulana asking him and Jawaharlal to resign. I have only to say that opposition to the 'Quit India' resolution was not confined to Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal. Govind Ballabh Pant, Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali held the same views and they expressed them. The controversy was not about violence and non-violence as the Maulana would have us believe. It was understood that the movement started by Gandhiji would be on the basis of non-violence. This was stated in the resolution itself. The controversy was about how our movement would be understood by America, China and Russia which had impressed on Britain the need to grant India sufficient freedom to be able to mobilise Indian help for the Allied cause. In his book (p. 73) the Maulana says : "In the first week of July, there was a meeting of the Working Committee at Wardha. I reached Wardha on July 5 and Gandhiji spoke to me for the first time about the 'Quit India' Movement." It is sad that the Maulana should have forgotten the draft resolution in Hindi suggested by Gandhiji and brought by Mirabehn to the Working Committee meeting held in Allahabad from April 21 to May 1, 1942 and the part played by him, described by us earlier. Apart from the draft resolution Gandhiji had been educating the public about the 'Quit India' idea through the columns of *Harijan* between the two Working Committee meetings, the one held at Allahabad and the other at Wardha.

to me a priceless gift in the weapon of Ahimsa.... If today I sit quiet in inaction in the midst of this conflagration which is enveloping the whole world...God will not forgive me." "Shall I ask the Japanese to tarry a while ? Must we allow China to be overrun ?" he asked. "If all the world's nations oppose me, even if the whole of India tried to persuade me that I am wrong, I shall go ahead, not for India's sake alone but for the sake of the world." He concluded : "The actual struggle does not commence this very moment. You have merely placed certain powers in my hands. My first act will be to wait upon H.E. the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. This may take two or three weeks. What are you to do in the meanwhile ? I will tell you. There is the spinning-wheel. I had to struggle with the Maulana Saheb before it dawned upon him that in a non-violent struggle it had an abiding place. The fourteen-fold constructive programme is there for you to carry out. But there is something more you have to do and it will give life to that programme. Everyone of you should from this very moment consider yourself a free man or woman and even act as if you are free and no longer under the heel of this imperialism. This is no make-believe. You have to cultivate this spirit of freedom before it comes physically. The chains of a slave are broken the moment he considers himself a free man." He told the audience that after the arrest of the leaders each person would be his own general and would be expected to "do or die" in the implementation of the 'Quit India' resolution "keeping within the four corners of non-violence".

The proceedings of the A.I.C.C. meeting concluded around mid-night. I was staying at the time with the Sardar. We were aroused from our sleep at about 3.30 a.m. by the police. Though we had heard rumours of our immediate arrest, we were not expecting it so soon, as Gandhiji had said he would seek an interview with the Viceroy before launching his movement. However, we were not surprised. The police told us that we were under arrest and were to accompany them. They showed us no warrants nor did we ask to see them. They also did not inform us about our destination. They gave us some time to get ready though they wanted us to be quick about it. We discovered that all the private telephones had been cut off. Fortunately, my wife was with me and there was no

order of arrest for her. She was associated with the work of the A.I.C.C. I had brought all my staff consisting in those days of about half a dozen people. My hurried instructions to Sucheta were that under no circumstances were she and other members of the staff to leave Bombay. They must stay there and try to carry on the A.I.C.C. work as best they could. They may go anywhere but avoid U.P. As for the funds that would be required, I asked Sucheta to seek the help of Bhai Pratap Dialdas, a Sindhi friend. I also mentioned other sources.

We were hurried off to the Victoria Terminus station. It was strictly guarded and closed to the public. All the incoming and outgoing trains had been stopped. At the station we found that some members of the Working Committee had already arrived and others were being brought in. Gandhiji with Mahadevbhai and Mirabehn was already there. The special train had only a few compartments. In one were accommodated Gandhiji and his party and Sarojini Naidu. In another were the members of the Working Committee and the third was occupied by other local leaders who had also been arrested. The Inspector-General of Prisons and the police occupied a separate compartment. The I.G. was an old friend but he would not inform us of our destination. Neither did we ask him, as we did not wish to put him in an awkward position. When we assembled in the compartment, Pant was missing. He joined us a couple of days later at Ahmednagar. He said he took his own time to get ready—nothing unusual with him !

Our train stopped at Chinchwad (Poona). In spite of all the precautions taken by the Government, the news of our arrest and the direction of our journey had leaked out and people in Poona evidently knew that our train would stop there. As soon as the train arrived, some young people came running towards the train, which had been kept at a little distance from the platform. But the police armed with lathis chased them away. Seeing this, Jawaharlal jumped out of the compartment through the window and shouted to the young men to come. But the police surrounded him. Ultimately he had to be carried inside the compartment. So far as I remember, Shankarrao also participated in the escapade.

Gandhiji's party was detrained at Poona, while the Working Committee members were taken further on. Our train in the

afternoon stopped beyond some station and we were taken to a fort. We knew that the only fort in that area would be that of Ahmednagar. About half a dozen rooms had been prepared for us within a high-walled enclosure inside the fort. These arrangements could not have been made between the time the A.I.C.C. resolution was passed and our arrests. The fact is that preparations for wholesale arrests and severe repression to put down any movement that might be started had been made much earlier. Detention camps had been set up beforehand and even lists of people who were to be arrested had been drawn up. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Viceroy refused to give an interview to Gandhiji even when he had said in the A.I.C.C. meeting that he would seek guidance from the Viceroy before launching any movement.

It is not my purpose here to describe the life we lived in the fort for almost three years. However, I must record that for the first 20 days no newspaper was given to us. Also, we could not communicate with anybody outside our four walls. No member of the public knew what had happened to us. All correspondence was prohibited. Even our jailor and the attendants serving us could not leave the enclosure.

After 20 days, when we got the *Times of India*, then an Anglo-Indian paper, there was a reference to Mahadevbhai as if he was no more. We made enquiries from the European Superintendent of our little jail whether it was true that he was dead. He confirmed our worst fears. As we learnt afterwards, on August 15 Mahadevbhai had died, within a week of his arrest. This was tragic news, as we had left him hale and hearty. The worst of it was that we did not know exactly when and how he had died. He was a dear friend. He had served Gandhiji by then for about 25 years, serving him in every way. He was his trusted Secretary, who kept a faithful and detailed diary of Gandhiji's activities from day to day. It was more painful to think what a great blow Mahadev's death would be to Gandhiji. But in that place, cut off from the whole world, we could only nurse our sorrow in silence, not even daring to speak of it to one another.

When we started receiving the newspapers, we got an inkling of what had happened after our arrest. Of course, we could only form a vague idea of what was going on in the country. After-

wards we learnt that on the morning of the 9th, scores of Congressmen and women gathered at Birla House. Gandhiji was to have addressed them about the immediate programme. Many of them did not even know of his arrest and that of the other leaders. Pyarelal, who was not arrested and who was anxious that no meeting should be held at Birla House to avoid embarrassment to the host and the wholesale arrest of workers, explained in a few words to this distraught gathering the last message of Gandhiji. It was that they were to avoid two things—violence and cowardly submission. For the rest they must carry on the struggle of non-violent non-co-operation.

The wholesale arrest of the leaders touched off a spontaneous popular revolt throughout India. For a week all business was paralysed in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Bangalore, Calcutta and many other places. The authorities reacted with savage repression which in turn led to further desperate action by the people.

This spontaneous movement the A.I.C.C. office, which was established in Bombay in accordance with my instructions, sought to regulate. Sadiq Ali, Sucheta, Dahyabhai Patel, Mridula, my nephew Girdhari and other political workers present in Bombay held a secret meeting somewhere on the evening of the 9th and drew up plans for running the A.I.C.C. office. It was not to be located in one place. The workers met constantly to consult one another and chalk out the programme. It soon succeeded in establishing links with the various groups that had spontaneously come into operation in the different provinces and were all working underground. It was impossible to function openly on account of total repression by the Government. It was a loose, tenuous organisation. Instructions, money and news went out from Bombay to various parts of India. All those who felt that they had something to contribute to the cause sooner or later got in touch with this office. Aruna, Lohia, Achyut and other leaders of the Socialist group joined after a while. Among other work, they successfully organised and operated an underground radio transmitter which was on the air every day at a fixed time giving news of the movement in different parts of the country. It sent out messages of encouragement and hope to the workers. It gave the public the harrowing accounts of victims of police terror. The trans-

mitter had to be constantly shifted from place to place because of the hot chase by the police. Ultimately it was discovered and a brave young girl, Usha Mehta, was arrested while broadcasting. As a consequence, she suffered greatly in jail. The office sent out secret bulletins and instructions to all parts of India, but action often anticipated instructions. People acted on their own. The office succeeded from time to time in sending out to friends abroad news of the movement and of the cruel repression. The agents and messengers of the A.I.C.C. were soon travelling all over India. Many of them were young men and women from wealthy and fashionable homes who had no political background but took all the risks involved in this hazardous work. Those who had organised the A.I.C.C., together with the Socialist leaders, kept constantly moving throughout the country in an effort to keep up the tempo of the movement. The office functioned for about 18 months. By then, one by one the main workers were picked up. Almost the last to be arrested was Sucheta in April 1944. Aruna successfully evaded the police till the end.

The popular revolt assumed serious proportions. In Jamshedpur thousands of workers, drawn from all over India, kept away from work for a fortnight as a protest against the arrest of the leaders. The students, naturally, were in the vanguard; eighty per cent of the university students walked out. The Banaras Hindu University students closed the campus gates to police officials and mobilised the University training corps against any attempt by the authorities to enter the University.

The authorities let loose cruel repression. In Delhi, the police fired on 47 separate occasions on August 11 and 12. In U.P. there were 29 firings between August 9 and 21, resulting in the death of 76 persons and severe injury to 114. In the Central Provinces the police killed 64, wounded 102 and arrested 11,088 in the first three weeks. In Mysore State about 600 persons were killed by police firing during the first few days of the movement. In Patiala, eight students were killed while trying to hoist the national flag over a public building. Over 100 were shot in a Mysore procession. In Calcutta there were numerous firings, resulting in many deaths. The same was the case in all big cities. In Midnapore (Bengal)

and in some parts of Maharashtra, parallel Governments were set up which functioned effectively for a short time.

The casualties from August 9 to November 30, 1942 were, according to the Secretary of State for India, 1,008 killed, and 3,275 seriously injured. The popular estimate was very much higher. The number of people imprisoned was over one hundred thousand.

The movement had taken a turn not contemplated by Gandhiji and the Congress leaders. Infuriated by the wholesale arrests of their leaders and the cruel repression let loose by the authorities, people went mad and in several places destroyed public property like bridges, police stations, etc., and removed even rail tracks, cut off telegraph wires and vented their anger in various other acts of violence. Had the people had the guidance of the leaders, such wanton destruction would not have taken place. Even if Gandhiji alone were out, he would have undertaken a fast if nothing else had prevailed. It would have cooled down people's ardour for destruction and the movement would have gone on generally on right lines. A reign of terror was let loose in Midnapore district where two tehsils had completely ousted British administration. Thirty thousand people in this and the 24-Parganas district, including several hundred nationalists, who fleeing before British arms, had taken refuge on a low-lying island in the vicinity, were struck by a tidal wave raised by a cyclone and perished. Even after this, the District Magistrate of Midnapore in a report to the Government recommended that in view of the political misdeeds of the people, "not only should the Government withhold relief but it should not permit any non-official organisation to conduct relief in the affected area for one month". However, the A.I.C.C. office was able to render them some relief through Sri A. P. Choudhury and his band of workers in Bengal with the help of local people. In Chimur, a big village in Chanda district in the Central Provinces, four officials were killed. The Government retaliation took the form of collective fines. Twenty villagers were sentenced to death and twenty-six to life imprisonment; sixty women were raped by the police.

The Government, by the use of overwhelming force, were able to put down the movement; but the spirit released could not be quelled. Though the struggle failed to achieve its immediate object,

it did demonstrate, as nothing else could have done, India's irrepressible will to be free. The Chief Secretary to the Bengal Government reported on September 2, 1942, "All sections of Indian opinion may be said to be at one in support of the demand for the immediate transference of power and the establishment of a national Government."

It is my opinion that India could not have achieved its independence but for the accession of strength which the nation received by the successive struggles started by Gandhiji. A nation which could throw a challenge to the Empire at a time when the armies of all the Allies were on Indian soil could no more be held in thraldom.

The British were in a pitiable condition after the war. They thought that they would no more be able to hold India in subjection. They could not depend any more on the Indian army. The flower of their youth had perished in the war. The country was under great financial strain. Their foreign debts had been increasing enormously during the war. They wanted to cut their losses. They, therefore, decided to quit India. While ruling a colonial people the British consolidate their power through a policy of 'divide and rule'. When they are obliged to leave a country, they do so after dividing it. They did it in Ireland. They did so in Palestine and again in Cyprus. Recently, they have left several African countries after sowing seeds of discord.

To resume our narrative. Simultaneously with the arrest of the leaders, the Government issued a statement embodying the resolution passed by the Viceroy's Executive Council. In justification of the arrest of the leaders, it accused Gandhiji and the Congress of premeditated violence. On August 14, soon after entering his detention camp in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy protesting against these accusations. He said that the Government had done wrong in precipitating the crisis by arresting the Congress leaders because he (Gandhiji) had publicly declared his intention of seeking an interview with the Viceroy, in an effort to appeal to him to examine fairly the Congress case before rejecting it outright. The conclusion he drew from this action of the Government was that "they were afraid that the extreme caution and the gradualness with which the Con-

gress was moving towards direct action might make the world opinion veer round to the Congress... and expose the hollowness of grounds for the Government rejection of the Congress demand".

The official statement had said that the Government had waited patiently in the hope that "wiser counsels might prevail". Gandhiji indignantly questioned the meaning of "wiser counsels" and asked why a Government pledged to guarantee independence to India should hope for the abandonment of a legitimate demand by the people. Instead of patiently reasoning with the leaders, he contended, the Government had resorted to immediate repression. This had plunged the "nation into confusion". As for the accusation of premeditated violence, Gandhiji strongly repudiated it and said that "violence was never contemplated by the Congress". The Government had wrongly read sinister motives in an open and non-violent movement. Answering the charge of previous violent preparations by the Congress, Gandhiji wrote that as soon as the Government came to have such information, they "should have brought to book the parties concerned" immediately, instead of now making "unsupported allegations".

The Government resolution had also asserted that the Congress wanted power for itself. Gandhiji pointed out that the Congress had offered that if, simultaneously with the declaration of independence, the Government could not trust the Congress to form a government, they could entrust the Muslim League with this task. According to him, the offer made by the Government that after the war "India shall devise for herself, with full freedom of decision and on a basis embracing all and not only a single party, the form of government, which she regards as most suited to her conditions" was unrealistic and bound to fail. Gandhiji argued that "parties grow up like mushrooms, for without proving their representative character, the Government will welcome them as they have done in the past, if they oppose the Congress". He concluded by saying that "the Congress seeks to kill imperialism as much for the sake of the British people and humanity as for India....The present mutual slaughter on the scale never before known to history is suffocating enough. But slaughter of truth accompanying the butchery and enforced by falsity of which the resolution is reeking adds strength to the Congress position".

In a cryptic reply the Viceroy dismissed Gandhiji's letter, saying that he could neither accept his contention nor agree to reconsider the Government policy.

As more and more reports of violence reached Gandhiji through the Press, he sent another letter to the Viceroy on December 31, 1942. In this he asked the Viceroy to convince him of his error and in that case, he said, he would make "ample amends". Or if a change in policy was desired, he should be put in touch with the Working Committee. Failing these alternatives, the only course left to a satyagrahi would be to "crucify the flesh" by resorting to a fast. A belated reply to this letter reached Gandhiji on January 18, 1943, which gave him no satisfaction. Yet he again wrote to the Viceroy on the 19th. In this letter he reiterated his two conditions and pleaded with him "to make up your mind to end the impasse". The Viceroy wanted Gandhiji to dissociate himself from the resolution of August 8 and the policy that the resolution represented. Gandhiji refused to resile from his position. Nothing came out of this prolonged correspondence. In the final reply the Viceroy said that he would consider the fast as motivated by a desire on the part of Gandhiji to find an "easy way out" and described it as "political blackmail". Gandhiji repudiated the mean motives imputed to him and commenced the fast on February 10, 1943.

The news of his fast caused deep anxiety and gloom over the whole country. In deference to public opinion H.P. Modi, N. R. Sarkar and M. S. Aney resigned from the Executive Council on the 17th. On the 18th, as Gandhiji's condition deteriorated further, a countrywide agitation was started for his release. On February 19, a non-party conference was held in Delhi to press for his release in the "interest of Indo-British relationship". Jinnah refused to attend this meeting.

During the second week of his fast Gandhiji's condition grew worse. The Government made all preparations for his cremation and issued a book, *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances*, in an effort to slander the Congress and even Gandhiji after his death. However, he rallied round in the third week and successfully completed the ordeal of 21 days' fast. Dr. B. C. Roy, who was attending on him, said, "He was very near death. He fooled us all."

Our condition in the Ahmednagar Fort was pitiable indeed. People outside could get some reliable information. We had only newspaper reports. For about 17 days the reports were that Gandhiji's condition was fast deteriorating. The worst of it was that neither could we meet him, nor write to him nor do anything regarding his fast. In spite of all the precautions taken by the Government, rumours reached us that the authorities had made preparations for his cremation within the palace. They had also kept themselves ready to crush any demonstration consequent on his death. We, however, found some consolation in the fact that he was surrounded by those who loved him dearly and was being attended on by the best non-official doctors who were greatly attached to him. Sushila was already there. Dr. Gilder had been transferred from Yeravda jail to the Aga Khan Palace and Dr. B. C. Roy was in Poona and attending on him. Even after the news that he had safely survived the ordeal, our anxiety remained, for the period of convalescence could also be dangerous.

Gandhiji believed that he was to be kept in prison for many years. He, therefore, had made preparations for a long stay. He had chalked out a careful daily programme and followed it scrupulously. He not only read religious literature, as was his wont while in prison, but made a wide selection of other books. He studied books on anatomy, economics and grammar. He read Shakespeare, Browning, Bernard Shaw, Marx, Lenin and Stalin. For the first time he read Karl Marx's *Das Kapital.* His comment on reading it was, "I could have written it better, assuming, of course, that I had the leisure for study Marx has put in." He added, "I do not care whether Marxism is right or wrong. All I know is that the poor are being crushed."

Considering the time at his disposal, Gandhiji was a well-read person. He was as great a searcher of knowledge as of truth. He was also a great advocate. How well and ably he could argue can be seen from the correspondence he had with the authorities from jail. His reasoning sometimes gave an impression to his opponents that he was playing some intellectual trick, which they could not understand. The white bureaucracy always talked of him as a wily Asiatic, his Indian opponents considered him a cunning Bania. Gandhiji was also a powerful writer both in English

and in Gujarati. He had a simple, chaste and refined style. He was austere in the use of words, never using more of them than necessary. Sometimes, his writings required a commentary to bring out his thought.

It has, therefore, surprised me that Gandhiji, with all his wide range of reading, his knowledge and his great power of expressing his ideas lucidly and cogently, is not classed among the intellectuals of his age. Nor is he classed among the progressive writers. Is it because he does not use the modern phrases made current by communists and fellow-travellers who are considered as progressive writers in India? For instance, Gandhiji does not talk of the proletariat but of the poor. He does not speak of exploitation but of injustice. He does not talk of democracy but of Ram Rajya ! While talking of justice being rendered to the poor, he does not call himself a socialist but believes in social justice and near-equality. He does not believe that he must wait for the establishment of socialism in the land to renounce his worldly possessions. This is done by rich socialists in Europe and elsewhere. He considered worldly possessions as undesirable and renounced them. Such renunciation means not only giving up wealth but also the desire for it. He did not think that all wealth is created by labour alone, but is socially produced. No Robinson Crusoe, be he a labourer or a capitalist, can produce wealth, living on his solitary island.

There is perhaps yet another reason for Gandhiji not being classed as an intellectual and a progressive writer. The moral grandeur of his character put under shade his intellectual, organisational and other qualities. Not only was his intellect great but he was up to his last breath trying to acquire knowledge. In the Aga Khan Palace he was trying late in life to educate Kasturba. When in his last days he was in Noakhali, he began learning Bengali. He believed that a searcher after truth must progressively increase his knowledge and awareness. It enhances his capacity to detect subtler shades of untruth and self-deception.

On the evening of the day of our arrest, Kasturba insisted on addressing a prohibited meeting and thus breaking the law. She was arrested and sent to the Aga Khan Palace for detention. Sushila and Pyarelal had also subsequently joined the party. Kasturba

had been keeping indifferent health and Mahadev's death was a heavy blow to her. Then came the fast of Gandhiji. This was a great mental strain. After the fast her health rapidly deteriorated. In December 1943 the Government issued a communique regarding her health, in which they stated that as her release would involve her separation from her husband during her illness, she continued to be detained. By February 20, 1944 her condition was declared as grave. Devadas wanted to get penicillin for injection from England but Gandhiji dissuaded him from doing so. He said : "You cannot cure your mother now, no matter what wonder drugs you may muster. I will yield to you if you insist. But you are hopelessly wrong. She has refused all medicines and water these two days. She is in God's hands now. You may interfere, if you wish to, but I advise against the course you are adopting. And remember you are seeking to cause physical pain by an injection every four to six hours to a dying mother." Devadas had to yield to his father's advice. Gandhiji sat by the side of his dear one all the time. "Their sixty-two years' partnership ended on February 22 when Kasturba breathed her last lying on the lap of her husband."*

After her death, relatives and friends wished her cremation and rites connected with it to be performed outside the Aga Khan Palace. But as this would have meant a public funeral, the authorities refused the permission and she was cremated inside the palace. Her ashes were laid beside those of Mahadev.

In April 1944, Gandhiji suffered from malaria, which brought about an anaemic condition and low blood pressure. The deterioration in his health caused great concern and anxiety. After some time, on May 6, he and his companions were released unconditionally.

Before leaving the detention camp Gandhiji and his party paid their final homage to the two departed comrades, Kasturba and Mahadev, by reciting prayers and offering flowers at their Samadhis. Gandhiji wrote to the Government that the place of cremation had become consecrated ground and trusted that the plot would be

*Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 296.

acquired by the Government and he would arrange for the proper upkeep of the sacred spot.*

It is not our purpose here to describe the treatment accorded to the greatest man of his time by an infuriated imperial Government. There were constant and needless pinpricks, particularly during his fast and Kasturba's illness. This, even though on a previous occasion the Government had admitted that Gandhiji meticulously observed the jail rules. The Indian officers in charge were so frightened that they insisted on carrying out literally the instructions they received from the higher authorities. They exercised no judgment of their own. They failed to adjust their conduct according to the situation in utter indifference to the feelings of Gandhiji and his companions. This was true generally of the Indian part of the administrative services before independence. They merely carried out orders mechanically.

After his release, Gandhiji rested at Poona for three days and then proceeded to Bombay where he stayed at Juhu. His health was shattered and it was found that he had contracted hookworm infection. His first concern was to nurse his health to be able to resume his active life. On May 14 he entered on a fortnight's silence. After that for some time he broke his silence only for a couple of hours a day.

On June 15 he returned to Poona. Here on the 29th he met the Congress workers of Maharashtra. A great controversy about the use of violence and non-violence was going on at that time among Congress workers. Gandhiji's own position also seemed to have created some doubts. In his last speech at the A.I.C.C. meeting he had said that nobody should submit through cowardice. Also, he had up to that time not condemned the people who had indulged in violent demonstrations against the terrorist regime. If his correspondence with the authorities had been published, there would have been no misconception about his position. He had therein squarely blamed the authorities for their "leonine violence" which had resulted in maddening the people. Questioned by the Maharashtra workers he made his position crystal clear. In brief, he said he was "wedded to truth and

*Since then the whole palace and the vast ground attached thereto have been generously gifted to the nation by the present Aga Khan.

non-violence, not merely as a matter of discipline or expedience, but as a rule of conduct in all walks of life". Therefore he could "endorse nothing untruthful or violent". But he refused "to sit in judgement upon the actions of others".* He also told them that they should not feel frustrated because their object had not been immediately achieved. He said: "Frustration is born of our own weaknesses and loss of faith. So long as we do not lose faith in ourselves, it is well with India. This is the message that I want to leave with you this evening."**

* Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 314.
** Quoted in Tendulkar's *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 315.

# 29

# Impasse

EARLY in July 1944 Gandhiji went to Panchgani. During his stay there, his interviews to the Indian and foreign Press as well as his correspondence with Wavell attracted a great deal of attention and gave rise to the speculation that some way might be found to bring about a settlement. However, as the position of Gandhiji and the Government remained basically unaltered, no way could be found to resolve the impasse.

While Gandhiji was in the Aga Khan Palace, Jinnah had said that if Gandhiji wrote to him showing a desire to meet him, he would be ready to do so. Gandhiji therefore had written a letter to him which the Government refused to forward. During his fast Rajaji had been insistent that Gandhiji and Jinnah should meet and settle the dispute between the League and the Congress. At this time, Gandhiji therefore wrote to Jinnah that he was prepared to meet him and discuss the Congress-League differences. Accordingly, Gandhiji met him at the latter's residence in Bombay on September 9. It would be pertinent here to record what Gandhiji said after the first day's meeting. He told Rajaji: "It was a test of my patience.... I am amazed at my own patience....His (Jinnah's) contempt for your formula (Rajaji formula) and his contempt for you is staggering...."* This was the opinion of Jinnah about one who had even at the risk of his standing in the Congress advocated that the Congress accept in principle Jinnah's two-nation theory. It would appear that in Rajaji's formula Jinnah suspected some trap.

*Quoted in Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol.1, Book one, p.84.

The talks lasted for three weeks without resulting in any agreement. During their course, Jinnah in one of his letters to Gandhiji said: "It is quite clear that you represent nobody else but the Hindus, and as long as you do not realise your true position and the realities, it is very difficult for me to argue with you." Yet he continued the talks. At the end of the talks Gandhiji issued a statement wherein he said: "It is a matter of deep regret that we two could not reach an agreement but there is no cause for disappointment. The break-down is only so-called.... My experience of the precious three weeks confirms me in the view that the presence of the third power hinders a solution." One wonders why Jinnah consented to the talks and why he dragged them on for so long if he considered Gandhiji merely as a representative of the Hindu community. Gandhiji never had been a member of any Hindu communal organisation. But it is a fact that a large and ever increasing section of Muslims under Jinnah's leadership considered Gandhiji as a Hindu communalist. This may be due to the fact that, among other things, he advocated reform in Hindu society. His work for the uplift of the Harijans was specially viewed in this light. But untouchability was not confined to Hindu society; it also existed among other communities. For Gandhiji it was a humanitarian reform apart from the fact that it rid Hinduism of a cruel and pernicious custom. As time passed, the Muslims, by and large, came to consider Gandhiji as the arch-enemy of Islam. The Muslim community failed to see that the communalists and orthodox Hindus were opposed to the whole programme of Gandhiji. It was this that ultimately led to his martyrdom at the hands of a Hindu fanatic. It was then that the Muslims realised that he was their true friend and that he loved all humanity.

As August 9 drew near, Congress workers asked Gandhiji how this day was to be observed. He told them that no mass civil disobedience should be resorted to, but individuals were free to act non-violently according to their sense of "self-respect". He called upon all the underground workers to "discover" themselves, that is, to surrender to the police. For the rest he exhorted them to work for the 14-point constructive programme. Some underground workers, in response to Gandhiji's advice, surrendered to the police

by reading the 'Quit India' resolution in front of the Police Commissioner's office in Bombay.

Gandhiji's 75th birthday on October 2 was celebrated not only in India but also in many other parts of the world. Netaji Bose, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army and the head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, performed a flag salutation ceremony in Rangoon. In the course of his speech on the occasion he said: "Father of our Nation! In this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings." In Sevagram the simple ceremony started with Sarojini applying the *kumkum* to Gandhiji's forehead and garlanding him with hand-spun yarn and flowers. Thakkar Bapa presented him with a purse of Rs. 85 lakhs which had been collected in memory of Kasturba. Gandhiji formed a trust to manage the fund for the service of women and children in rural India. He became the chairman of the Trust and guided its work till his death.

At the instance of the Viceroy, in January 1945, it is believed Bhulabhai had talks with Liaquat Ali to find ways and means to end the deadlock and pave the way for the formation of an interim national Government consisting of the members of the Congress and the League in the Central Assembly. Bhulabhai met Liaquat Ali and they discussed the proposal for forming the national Government under the 1935 Act, consisting of an equal number of members of the Congress and the League. The representatives of the minorities would be inducted into the Cabinet by mutual consent. Though such a Government, when formed, would function within the framework of the 1935 Act, it was to be clearly understood that any measure not passed by the Assembly would not be enforced by the Governor-General under his special powers. But if the Governor-General sought to interfere, the Government would resign. Bhulabhai asked Liaquat Ali if this agreement had been seen and approved by Jinnah. He answered in the affirmative. Gandhiji had cautioned Bhulabhai to be careful and to get everything in black and white and signed. However, Bhulabhai in his eagerness to bring about a settlement did not quite take these precautions. The result was that, though there was a draft of the agreement, it was afterwards stated by Liaquat Ali inside and outside the Assembly that the copy with himself did not bear his own

signature.* Later, Liaquat Ali declared that there was no agreement and that he had not consulted Jinnah. Thus this effort failed. Gandhiji had always held that any negotiations for a settlement could be carried on only with the Congress Working Committee. Evidently, he gave his consent to the talks as exploratory. We in Ahmednagar did not fancy the way Bhulabhai had initiated the talks or his willingness to equate the League with the Congress. Though the talks failed, they left a bitter taste in the mouth.**

*Unfortunately, Bhulabhai did not contradict this statement of Liaquat Ali, the reason being, as stated by Sri M. C. Setalvad in his book *Bhulabhai Desai*, that he (Bhulabhai) yet expected some agreement with the League.

**Maulana Azad in his book, *India Wins Freedom* (p. 134), writes: "Bhulabhai became a member of the Working Committee and was counted among its first-rank leaders. This, however, made some of the older members of the Congress jealous of him and they felt that so much importance should not be given to a man who was a comparatively recent recruit." One wonders which members of the Working Committee the Maulana is referring to. Bhulabhai's membership of the Working Committee was powerfully backed by Vallabhbhai. Jawaharlal accepted his inclusion in 1936 at Lucknow. There was no question of any jealousy, but some members did feel that Bhulabhai was not suited to be a soldier in a satyagraha fight which entailed the hardships of jail life. Also, his political outlook was more that of the moderates than of Gandhiji.

The Maulana says: "Bhulabhai did not enjoy good health and I had not, therefore, included him in my new Working Committee." The Maulana has perhaps forgotten that the senior members of the Working Committee were not in "good health". Rajendra Babu, for instance, was always ailing. Surely there must have been some other fundamental reason for the Maulana who was his admirer to drop him from his Working Committee ! The Maulana writes: "He [Gandhiji] had earlier opposed India's participation in the war effort but after his release he had offered Indian co-operation in return for the recognition of Indian freedom." Evidently the Maulana forgets that Gandhiji had made his own position clear. We have already recorded what he told the Congress workers in Poona after his release in 1944. Participation in the war had been accepted by the Congress. It was never accepted by Gandhiji.

The description that the Maulana has given about the negotiations that Bhulabhai carried on in the absence of the Working Committee with Liaquat Ali reads like an apologia. He seems to have forgotten his own great irritation at the way the negotiations were carried on and their results. His irritation was natural, as he was the President.

The Maulana writes: "There were some people who sought to influence Gandhiji's judgment by working upon his close associates. They used to report

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*Footnote continued from p. 222*

various incidents to them in the expectation that these would reach Gandhiji's ears." The Maulana adds, "Gandhiji generally had the capacity to ignore such insinuations and innuendos but there were times when his judgment was affected if something was continually repeated to him by those who belonged to his personal circle." The Maulana forgets that whatever effect repeated complaints from his personal circle had on Gandhiji, he always referred them to the persons concerned. If they denied the charges, he accepted their word. So far as I know, the complaint against Bhulabhai was that he drank, and Gandhiji had referred this complaint to him. There had been no answer. Gandhiji had also heard such a complaint against one other senior member of the Working Committee. He referred it to him in a meeting of the Working Committee and the member denied it. The matter was, therefore, over so far as Gandhiji was concerned. He did not on that account want his elimination from the position that he held. He was used to the foibles of the great. The Maulana says: "Feeling against him [Bhulabhai] became so strong that when the General Elections were held in the winter of 1945-46, he was not offered a Congress ticket." It will not be out of place to record here that Gandhiji had nothing to do with the granting of tickets to intending members of the legislature. He did not concern himself with the details of Congress affairs. He was concerned with the basic policies. About these too he only gave his advice. The election tickets were given by the Parliamentary Board of the Working Committee, and the Maulana as President was Chairman of that Committee. I do not remember his having protested against the denial of the ticket to Bhulabhai. If he had done so, his advice would have been followed. I say this because I myself as General Secretary was a member of the Parliamentary Board. I had to record its proceedings. The fact is that Bhulabhai was inducted into the Working Committee on the insistence of Vallabhbhai.

# 30

# Simla Conference

A COUPLE of months before our release, as we were expecting it, it was decided that we meet together and discuss the political situation prevailing in the country then and chalk out some possible programme for the future. In this meeting the Maulana made some oblique reference to the 'Quit India' resolution. This irritated the Sardar. It was realised that meetings of this sort might create unnecessary friction. The strain under which we had been living for almost three years had not helped in soothing our nerves. It was, therefore, decided that the question of the future programme which could not be made without reference to the past may be left to the time when we met outside as free men.

About a couple of months before our release, the members of the Working Committee were transferred from the Ahmednagar Fort to their respective provinces. Strangely enough, I was sent to Karachi, though I had not been a resident of Sind for more than 30 years! The members of the Working Committee were released on June 15, 1945. Immediately after consulting the President and members of the Working Committee I announced that a meeting of the A.I.C.C. would be held in Bombay from June 21. I rushed from Karachi to Poona to meet Gandhiji before the meeting of the A.I.C.C. When I asked him how he was feeling, he said that his health was restored and he was feeling fit. In the course of my talk with him he said: "I will yet give one more fight to the British Government before I have done." This was how Gandhiji's mind

was working. However, the British Government had other thoughts. The leaders of the Congress also, it would appear, had other ideas.

The A.I.C.C. met in Bombay. The main business before it was to consider the Wavell proposals as also his invitation to Congress leaders to meet him in conference at Simla along with leaders of other parties. It authorised Gandhiji and the Congress President, Maulana Azad, to deal with all phases of negotiations arising out of the Simla conference. The members of the Working Committee also proceeded to Simla for any consultation that might be necessary.

By that time the war with Germany had ended but not that with Japan. With the end of the war, the Labour Party refused to continue in the Coalition Government. Churchill had, therefore, to dissolve Parliament and advise fresh elections. He, however, wanted to improve the position of the Conservative Party in the elections. This, he thought, could be done if there was some settlement of the Indian problem. To this end, the Secretary of State for India made a statement in the House of Commons. The main features of this statement were :

1. It was not the intention of the British Government to introduce any constitutional change in the Government of India "contrary to the wishes of the major Indian communities". (It should be noted that he did not mention the people of India.)
2. The members of the Viceroy's Executive Council would be selected "from amongst leaders of Indian political life at the Centre and in the Provinces, in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including the equal proportions of Muslims and *Caste Hindus*".
3. The Viceroy would call "into conference a number of leading Indian politicians who are the heads of the most important parties or who have had recent experience as Prime Ministers of Provinces, together with a few others of special experience and authority".
4. The members of the new Executive Council were expected to support the war effort against Japan.

The Secretary of State authorised Lord Wavell, who had succeeded Linlithgow as Viceroy, to open negotiations with the Indian leaders on the above lines. Wavell in a broadcast speech on June

14, 1945 made an announcement embodying the proposals made in the Secretary of State's statement in the House of Commons.

Wavell called the conference of the leaders at Simla to meet on June 25. He invited 21 persons—the premiers of 11 provinces, the two leaders of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature and the Council of State, the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League in the Central Legislature and its leader in the Council of State, the leaders of the Nationalist Party and the European group in the Central Legislature, one representative each of the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs, and Gandhiji as the leader of the Congress and Jinnah as that of the Muslim League.

In response to his invitation, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy that he could not represent the Congress, and the appropriate person to be called was Azad, the President. He further pointed out that the use of the expression "caste Hindus" in the Viceroy's broadcast was offensive to his ears and the ears of "every politically minded Hindu". "I claim that there is no such person, speaking politically, as a caste Hindu, let alone the Congress which seeks to represent the whole of India which is yearning after political independence."

It is not possible that points raised by Gandhiji did not occur to the Viceroy. He had sought to placate Jinnah who had always held that the Congress was an organisation of caste Hindus and its Muslim members were renegades from the Muslim community. On Gandhiji's pointing out that the proper person to represent the Congress was the President, this deliberate omission was rectified and the Maulana was invited. However, the expression "caste Hindus" used for the Congress was not changed! It was repeatedly used till the end of the negotiations which brought about the independence of India coupled with the partition*

On the 25th the conference met at Simla under the presidentship of the Viceroy. No agreement was possible because, among other

*The Maulana in his book *India Wins Freedom* writes at page 104 : "A day after my release, I received in Calcutta the Viceroy's invitation to the Round Table Conference, which was to be held at Simla on 25th June." In recording this the Maulana seems to have altogether forgotten how he came to be invited to the Simla Conference. He has also failed to make any mention that the Congress was described both by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy as representative merely of the caste Hindus. He should have at least remem-

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things, the League wanted that the Congress should nominate the members of the new Executive only from among the caste Hindus. So far as the Muslim representatives were concerned, their names should be suggested to the Viceroy and they should be nominated after July 14 "to enable the members of the League Executive to have further informal consultations". The Viceroy also asked the different parties to provide him with lists from which the personnel of the Viceroy's Executive Council could be selected by him. By July 7 the Congress and the minority parties sent their lists. The Congress included the names of Maulana Azad and Asaf Ali. These two names were objected to by the League as it wanted that all Muslim names should be given by the League alone. Maulana Azad, however, made it clear that the inclusion of the Muslim names by the Congress was a matter of principle. He wrote, "The Congress is essentially a national organisation and it cannot possibly be a party to any arrangement, however temporary it may be, that prejudices its national character, tends to impair its growth of nationalism, and reduces the Congress indirectly to a communal body." The conference met again on July 14 only to be told by the Viceroy that it had broken down for want of agreement and, that he would consider in what way he could "help India".

Instead of reinstalling the Congress ministries in the provinces, the Government dissolved the legislatures both at the centre and in the provinces and called for fresh elections. After the elections the Congress was able to form ministries in all the provinces except in Bengal, the Punjab and Sind. In the Punjab a coalition Government of the Muslim League and the Unionist Party was formed. The N.-W.F.P. returned the Congress in a majority and a Congress ministry was formed there.

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bered that he, a Muslim, was the President of the Congress. Further on, the Maulana in his book gives high praise to the Viceroy. He says, "I always found Lord Wavell a man of innate refinement and consideration for others." This consideration was shown to the Maulana perhaps when he ignored his existence as Congress President in a political conference where the reins of the Imperial Government were to be given over to the Indians. One would wish that the Maulana had given the estimate of Wavell as a politician and as Viceroy and not of his personal qualities. Soon the British Government found that he was not quite adequate to the task assigned to him and, as we shall see, he was recalled.

# 31

# Cabinet Mission

In the meantime the Labour Government had been voted to power in England. In March 1946 the Labour Prime Minister, Attlee, declared that India would frame her own constitution and would be free to decide whether or not to remain in the Commonwealth. He also said that though the British Government were anxious to protect the rights of the minorities, they could not allow them "to stand in the way of India's progress". He further said that he believed the princes would not impede India's advance. In pursuance of this declaration he sent three members of his Cabinet—Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and Albert Alexander—to negotiate a settlement with the Indian leaders. The Cabinet Mission arrived in Delhi on March 24, 1946.

From April 1 to 17, 1946 they interviewed 472 Indians, in 182 sittings, in an effort to arrive at the "greatest common measure of agreement" among the various parties. The parties seemed to have grown like mushrooms. This, their very first act, provided a foretaste of what was to follow. On April 17 they left for Kashmir to review the results of their work. They returned on April 24 and on the 27th, in a letter addressed to the Congress and the Muslim League, Pethick-Lawrence suggested that they should make "one further attempt to obtain an agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress". The Mission suggested a scheme the fundamental principles of which were that there would be a Union Government dealing with Foreign Affairs, Defence and

Communications. There would be two groups of provinces, one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces. These groups would deal with all the other subjects which the provinces in their respective groups might desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial governments would deal with all the other subjects and the residuary powers would be vested in them. If the Muslim League and the Congress were prepared to enter into negotiations on this basis, arrangements could be made for them to meet in conference together with the Cabinet Mission, and for that purpose they requested the Presidents of the Congress and the League to send the names of four persons to negotiate on their behalf.

Even before the Working Committee had discussed the proposals and given their opinion, the Congress President, Maulana Saheb, had written a personal letter to the Cabinet Mission that he was agreeable to the proposals and it would be possible for him to carry the Working Committee with him. Cripps had then desired to consult Gandhiji before issuing the invitation to the Working Committee but, when this was mentioned to the Maulana Saheb, he said that it was not necessary.

The Working Committee was not aware of the personal letter from the Maulana to the Mission. It therefore considered the proposals as they stood.

It said the Congress was opposed to the formation of groups on communal lines. It also objected to a province being obliged to join a particular group. "You have referred to certain fundamental principles," the Congress President wrote, "but there is no mention of the basic issue before us, that is, the Indian independence and the consequent withdrawal of the British army from India." The Cabinet Mission explained that acceptance of the invitation to the proposed conference would not imply preliminary acceptance or approval of the terms suggested. It was, therefore, decided by the Working Committee that the President accept the invitation on behalf of the Congress. The Muslim League did the same and said that it was without "commitment or prejudice" to its demand for Pakistan.

The conference met at Simla from May 5 to 12, 1946. Two days after it began, the Cabinet Mission put forth some other

points for consideration in the light of the discussions that had taken place. As suggested by the Congress, the original list of the Union subjects was enlarged by the addition of "fundamental rights". The Congress had also demanded that the Union Government would have the necessary powers to raise finances for those subjects with which it had to deal. This point was not touched.

To make the Union acceptable to the League, it was suggested by the Mission that the Constituent Assembly should divide itself into three sections—one representing the Hindu majority provinces, the second representing the Muslim majority provinces and the third representing the Indian states. The first two sections would meet separately and decide provincial constitutions in their groups and, if they wished, the group constitutions also. To counterbalance the Congress objections to the compulsory groupings of the provinces in the sections, the Mission proposed that a province should have the freedom to 'opt' out of the regional group and go to another group or remain out of any group, by a majority of votes of its representatives, if the provincial or group constitution was not acceptable to it. The three sections would then meet together to frame the Indian constitution.

Under the Union Constitution there would thus be three divisions. The Muslim majority provinces would have parity of representatives in the Union legislature as well as in the Union Government with the Hindu majority provinces, irrespective of whether the provinces in question formed themselves into groups or not. Further, to compensate the League for the possible loss through 'opting' out of the N.-W.F.P. from the Muslim majority group and for the exclusion of Assam from the same, it was proposed that there should be the additional safeguard that any measure affecting a communal issue in the Union Constitution would not be passed unless the majorities of both the major communities voted in its favour. In all these proposals the Mission ignored the fact that India was a nation in spite of its various religions.

The Congress was prepared to accept the formation of groups, provided it was entirely 'optional'. It held that this would be for the representatives of the provinces to decide, after the Constituent Assembly had framed the constitution for the All-India Federal Union. The Muslim League, on the other hand, demanded

that there should be a separate constitution-making body for the six Muslim provinces, the Punjab, the N.-W.F.P., Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam, although Assam was a Hindu majority province. After the constitutions of the Pakistan Federal Government and the provinces therein were framed, the constitution-making body of the two groups—Pakistan group and Hindustan group—sitting together would deal with only three subjects, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications "necessary for Defence". The Muslim League also insisted that the Federal Union should have its finances through provincial contributions. The League further wanted that no decision—legislative, executive or administrative—should be taken by the Union in regard to any matter of a controversial nature except by a majority of 3/4ths.

The Mission from a democratic country with a Labour Government failed to see the injustice of equating the Hindu majority provinces with a population of 19 crores with the Muslim majority provinces with a population of a little over 9 crores ! This is how the Cabinet Mission wanted to give effect to Attlee's statement that the British Government "could not allow the minorities to stand in the way of India's progress". Gandhiji wrote to Sir Stafford Cripps on May 8 about these proposals: "This is worse than Pakistan." The Working Committee held that a statutory parity between the communities would make a mockery of democracy. The Congress President had made it clear at the Simla conference in 1945 that the Congress accepted parity as a "purely temporary arrangement and it should not be regarded as the permanent arrangement for the future". Under these conditions the Congress was confronted with the prospect of parity in the Union legislatures as well as in the Union Cabinet as a permanent feature of the Constitution of India. It was prepared to do anything within the bounds of reason to remove fear or suspicion from the minds of any province or community, but it was unable to endorse "unreal methods" which went against the "basic methods of democracy" on which they wanted to build their constitution.

Failure of the conference now seemed inevitable. The Congress thereupon suggested that an umpire should be appointed by the Congress and the Muslim League to settle matters of difference between the parties. This suggestion was turned down by the

League. On May 12, it was announced that the conference had failed. The members of the Mission returned from Simla to Delhi.

On May 16, the Mission published its own recommendations to ensure the "speedy setting up of a new Constitution". Its plan consisted of two parts: the long-term plan for the setting up of a constitution-making body and the short-term one for the formation of an "interim Government having the support of the major political parties", who might be willing to accept the statement.*

The issue was whether India was to be partitioned or remain united. The Muslim League contended that Muslims would find themselves under perpetual Hindu majority rule in a united India. It, therefore, demanded that the country should be partitioned and two areas, as they conceived them, formed into separate fully independent sovereign states. But the League was not willing to concede the same right to substantial areas in which non-Muslims were in a majority, which it claimed for Pakistan, on the ground of necessity to make Pakistan of their conception administratively and economically viable. For instance, it wanted Assam and the Frontier to have no say in their future. The League which had nothing to do with them was to decide for them. This also affected the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab and Hindus in Bengal and Sind. The 1946 elections in the N.-W.F.P. had been fought specifically on the issue of 'partition' and the electorate had given its clear verdict against it.

Every argument that could be advanced in favour of Pakistan could equally be used for the exclusion of non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. The Cabinet Delegation, therefore, in their plan of May 16, after careful consideration, turned down the proposition of a separate and fully independent sovereign State of Pakistan, as demanded by the Muslim League. Similarly, they rejected the proposition of a "smaller sovereign Pakistan" confined to the Muslim majority areas alone. The Mission again recommended the "three-tier scheme". The grouping was intended to give the Muslim League the "substance of Pakistan".

The difficulty of the plan was that what was conceded in the earlier part of the plan was cancelled by provisions in the later part. There was an obvious conflict between the language used in para

*See Appendix XIII.

15(5) and in para 19 (iv) and (v). While the former said "that the provinces should be free to form groups and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken together", the latter portion could be construed so as practically to force Assam and non-Muslim League province of the Frontier, where a Congress ministry was functioning, to join Muslim League dominated groups.

True, freedom was given to the provinces to 'opt' out, some time after the elections, under the new Constitution, to be framed by the sections in their constitution-making capacity, by a majority of the legislators of the provinces. But this in effect cancelled their freedom. The two sections had been so formed that the Punjab and Bengal would play a dominant role and would be able to thwart the will of provinces like the N.-W.F.P. and Assam. It would also thwart the will of extensive areas in Bengal and the Punjab, which had Hindu majorities.

Under the grouping arrangement proposed earlier at the Simla conference, the right to 'opt' out of the original group, if the group constitution or the provincial constitution framed by the group was not to the liking of a province, rested with the provinces themselves. That freedom was now taken away from the provinces, and made over to the majority in the sections, which would settle also the provincial constitutions.

The Muslim League was not slow to take advantage of the language used in the two sections. Jinnah declared that he found in the Mission's plan the "basis of Pakistan" and accordingly, the League on June 16 resolved that it was "willing to co-operate with the constitution-making machinery proposed...by the Mission". It held that "it would ultimately result in the establishment of a complete sovereign Pakistan" which had *ab initio* been ruled out by the Mission in their statement. However, in the course of their meeting after the announcement of the Mission's May 16 plan, Pethick-Lawrence had assured Gandhiji in reply to a question by him, that the whole basis of the three-tier plan was voluntary. There was no element of compulsion in it anywhere. Gandhiji then asked him, "Do the words used in the statement convey what they mean?" He said, "Yes." Thereupon Gandhiji said, "Then I accept it."

Gandhiji yet wanted the Working Committee to be careful so that the Mission's statement could be interpreted as a whole. This

was necessary to remove the inconsistencies and contradictions between various parts of the statement and make it conform in its entirety to the basic provisions, making it clear that the provinces would be free to decide their future. In one of his letters to the Congress President, Wavell had maintained that the May 16 statement did not make grouping compulsory. The only provision made was that the representatives of certain provinces should meet in sections, so that they could decide whether or not they wished to form a group. The Congress contended that if the freedom that was given to the provinces was real, para 15(5) of the State Paper could only mean that, if a province did not want to join a group, a decision in that respect, contrary to the wishes of its representatives, would not be forced upon it by the majority vote of the representatives of another province or provinces in the section. Otherwise, the freedom that was given to the provinces had no meaning. The Maulana wrote in his letter of May 20 to Pethick-Lawrence: "The basic provisions (referring to para 15 of the statement) give full autonomy to a province to do what it likes, and subsequently there appears to be a certain compulsion in the matter which clearly infringes that autonomy....It is not clear how the province or its representatives can be compelled to do something which they do not want to do." Thus, "a provincial assembly may give a mandate to the representatives not to enter a group or a particular group or section". The straightest course to ascertain the wishes of the provinces, Gandhiji pointed out, was that the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, at his first meeting, might ask the delegates of the provinces whether they would accept the assignment given to their provinces. If the representatives of a particular province said 'No', the province, in question, would be free to remain out of the group that might be formed by the section and there would be no further need for it to sit in the section.

On May 24, the Working Committee adopted a resolution which said: "The statement of the Cabinet Delegation affirms the basic principles of provincial autonomy and residuary powers vested in the provinces. It is further said that the provinces should be free to form groups. Subsequently, however, it is recommended that provincial representatives should meet in sections which 'shall proceed to settle the provincial constitutions for the provinces, in

each section, and shall also decide whether any group constitution shall be set up for those provinces'. There is a marked discrepancy in these two separate provisions....In order to retain the recommendatory character of the statement and in order to make the clauses consistent with each other, the Committee read paragraph 15 to mean that, in the first instance, the representatives of a province shall make their choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they are placed." This was Gandhiji's advice.

The Mission, however, maintained that the interpretation put by the Congress that "the provinces can in the first instance make the choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they are placed" did not accord with the Delegation's "intentions" and that the division into sections and groups was required by considerations that were "well known". Obviously this referred to the Muslim League's attitude. Gandhiji had pointed out that a legal document can only be interpreted by the Constituent Assembly or a competent legal authority. A legal document cannot be interpreted by the authors according to their intentions. It can only be interpreted in accordance with the language used. The Congress accepted this view and communicated the decision to the Mission.

On June 6 the Muslim League announced its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's scheme, in virtue of the very clause to which the Congress had objected "inasmuch as the basis of the foundation of Pakistan" was "inherent" in it. The Cabinet Mission thereupon "decided" that both the parties had "accepted" their May 16 statement. The Working Committee did not object. I strongly protested against this decision of the Working Committee but I was alone in this. The Viceroy was thus free to proceed with the work of constituting a coalition interim Government at the Centre. But the personnel of the interim Government was to be discussed between the Congress and the League. For this the Presidents of the two organisations had to meet in the presence of the Viceroy. However, Jinnah refused to sit at the same table with the Congress President—a Muslim. Hindus were "enemies", he said, but non-League Muslims were "traitors". He could not deal with "traitors". The Working Committee was prepared to parley with Jinnah though this issue should have been a matter of principle for it. It decided that Jawaharlal should deputise for the Congress

President but make it clear that he met Jinnah only as the Maulana's mouthpiece. Accordingly on June 12, Jawaharlal went to meet the Viceroy for a conference with Jinnah, but Jinnah did not turn up.

On June 16, 1946 the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission issued a statement setting forth their own proposals for the formation of an Interim Government.* Accordingly, invitations were issued to fourteen persons of whom six were Hindu members of the Congress (one being a member of the Scheduled Caste), five were Muslims of the Muslim League and three were representatives of the minority communities, viz., one Sikh, one Indian Christian and one Parsi.

Wavell sent an advance copy of the statement to Gandhiji. In the two lists the five Muslim names were identical, but in the names furnished by the Congress changes had been made without consulting it. The name of Sarat Chandra Bose was removed and that of Harekrushna Mahatab substituted. The Congress had included in their list the name of a woman member, a Christian, Amrit Kaur. But her name was not there. Dr. Zakir Husain, whom the Congress had included, was not mentioned. The Congress had objected to the inclusion of Abdur Rab Nishtar in the League's list, as he had been defeated in the 1946 election in the Frontier, but his name was included. One additional name in the Viceroy's list was that of a Government official, N. P. Engineer, the Advocate-General, who was the Prosecution Counsel in the Indian National Army trials.

On June 16, Gandhiji drafted for the Working Committee a letter to the Viceroy. It emphasised four points: (1) The League being avowedly a Muslim organisation could not include any non-Muslim in its list; (2) the Congress as a national organisation must have the right to include a Congress Muslim in its list; (3) the League could not have any say in the selection of any names outside its quota of five Muslims, and (4) in action, the Interim Government should be regarded as being responsible to the elected representatives in the Central Assembly.

Gandhiji's draft was scarcely considered. The Working Committee did not like the Viceroy's proposals but they did not want to reject them either. The difficulties created by the changes made by the Viceroy in the list of names submitted by the Congress, could,

*See Appendix XIV.

they thought, be overcome. But on the powers of the Interim Government the Working Committee was clear. In his letter of May 30 to the Congress President, Wavell had denied that he had ever agreed to grant the Interim Government dominion status powers. However, on seeking further clarifications, Wavell adopted a conciliatory attitude and wrote back that "His Majesty's Government would treat the new Interim Government with the same close consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government."

A tentative decision accepting the scheme of the Interim Government was accordingly taken in the Working Committee meeting on June 18, 1946 and a draft resolution was framed to that effect. But it was not communicated to the Viceroy. The next day Jawaharlal left for Kashmir, where the trial of Sheikh Abdullah was pending. He was arrested on the way and released after two days at the intervention of the Government of India. Some members of the Working Committee also left Delhi the same day, as they felt that their work in Delhi was as good as over, that is, both the long-term arrangements, which included grouping, and the Interim Government proposals were accepted. The next day I met Vallabhbhai and told him that they might do what they liked about the personnel of the Interim Government, but I would not give my consent to compulsory grouping and I would resign. He was very angry and we parted.

On June 19, Gandhiji told the Working Committee that if they agreed to the non-inclusion of a nationalist Muslim and the inclusion of the name of N. P. Engineer, he would have nothing to do with the whole business.

However, something unexpected happened which upset the whole arrangement. The *Statesman* at that time published the substance of a letter written by Jinnah to Wavell in which he had asked for a number of assurances in regard to the Interim Government, some of which were wholly new and which the Congress would never accept. The Congress President thereupon wrote to the Viceroy to ask for the text of Jinnah's letter and his reply. Among the assurances given by the Viceroy to Jinnah, in his letter of June 20, 1946, one was to the effect that no change in principle would be made in the list of names selected by the Viceroy without the consent of the two major parties. This meant that the Congress

could not nominate a nationalist Muslim, even within its quota, without the consent of the League. The other assurance given to Jinnah was that if any vacancy occurred among the minority seats (including the Scheduled Castes) both the major parties would be consulted. This gave to the Muslim League virtual power of veto in the selection of the representative of even the Scheduled Castes. The Mission and the Viceroy had earlier stated that in their proposal there was neither parity between the Congress and the Muslim League, nor between the Hindus and the Muslims. But in the Interim Government proposed by the Viceroy it was sought to be brought in by the back door. It was now clear beyond doubt to the Working Committee that the Viceroy was acting in a partisan manner. This feeling was further strengthened when on June 22, the Viceroy in a letter to the Congress President asked the Congress not to press their demand for the inclusion of a Muslim of their choice in the Government. "For reasons of which you are well aware, it is not possible for the Cabinet Mission or myself to accept this request." This was in glaring contrast to the reply which he had given to the Congress President on June 15 when the Congress had taken exception to a League nominee for the Interim Government. "I cannot accept the right of the Congress to object to a name put forward by the Muslim League, any more than I would accept similar objections from the other side."

Sudhir Ghosh saw Cripps on June 22. He reported that Cripps had told him that the Congress stand in regard to the inclusion of a nationalist Muslim was absolutely logical and legitimate but could not the Working Committee waive it? They (the Mission) had proceeded on a written assurance from the Maulana that the Working Committee would not stick out on that point. And now they felt themselves placed in an awkward position. It is strange that the Maulana should have written to the Mission that the Congress would not insist on the inclusion of a Muslim in the national Government without the knowledge of the Working Committee. And stranger still that when Gandhiji asked the Maulana whether he had written any such letter to the Cabinet Mission, he flatly denied having done so. We have already mentioned that Gandhiji had made plain to the Government that the Congress, being a national organisation, could not agree "to anything that would prejudice its

national character and reduce it indirectly into a communal body".

At noon a letter was received from the Viceroy asking the Congress President not to press the demand for the inclusion of a Muslim in the Congress list. When the Working Committee met the same afternoon, this question was discussed and ultimately put to the vote. The Committee refused to take power on such a condition. The Maulana naturally dissented. (Rarely was anything decided in the Working Committee by votes.)

When on the 23rd the Working Committee met, Gandhiji's clear and emphatic advice was that they should keep out of the Interim Government but go into the Constituent Assembly as it was a purely elective body and its representative character was admitted by the British Government. At this meeting Rajen Babu read out a telegram which he had received from Assam regarding the forms issued to the Speaker by the Reforms Officer by which the candidates to the Constituent Assembly were required to declare that they would be willing to serve as representatives for the province for purposes of para 19 of the Cabinet Mission statement. (Para 19 referred to the arrangement for compulsory grouping and the formation of a Provincial Constitution in the first instance, the section to which the Congress had objected.) The Chief Minister of Bombay had also written to the same effect. Gandhiji then remarked that "even the Constituent Assembly plan now stinks. I am afraid we cannot touch it."

This meant the dropping of the proposal for the formation of the national government. On the morning of the 24th a message was received by Gandhiji from Cripps that if the Congress accepted the long-term plan and rejected the short-term proposal, all that the Mission had done under the May 16 declaration would be scrapped and a *de novo* attempt would be made for a settlement. They invited Gandhiji and the Sardar to meet them. The Mission seemed to have made up their mind to clear up the mess created by the assurance given to Jinnah by Wavell. At 7 a.m. on the 24th Gandhiji and the Sardar met the members of the Mission. After the meeting the Sardar said to Gandhiji, "There is a meeting of the Working Committee; what am I to tell them?" Gandhiji scribbled (it was his silence day) that he was not satisfied with the talks. The Sardar was

irritated and said: "You raised doubts regarding para 19. They have given clear assurance on that. What more do you want?" Gandhiji wrote, "During our meeting Cripps said to me that if we (the Congress) were apprehensive about the wording of the instructions issued by the Reforms Office they could delete the reference to para 19 and substitute in its place the words 'for the purpose of the declaration of the 16th May....' Pethick-Lawrence thereupon interrupted and said : 'No, that presents difficulties.' " The Sardar did not agree with Gandhiji.

The Maulana, after hearing the report of the meeting with the Cabinet Mission, accompanied Gandhiji and the Sardar to the Working Committee. There were prolonged discussions. The Sardar said that they were under a promise to give their decision to the Cabinet Mission that afternoon. Gandhiji disagreed with this. He suggested that they should postpone their decision till he met the Cabinet Delegation in the evening and obtained further clarification from them. Finally, he said: "There is no question of my feelings being hurt. I am against deciding this issue today but you are free to decide as you like."

Now Gandhiji doubted whether even the Constituent Assembly could function freely. At the afternoon meeting of the Working Committee, it being his day of silence, he asked Pyarelal to read out a note which he had written. In it he pointed out that the Constituent Assembly had no *de jure* authority, as it did not bear the imprimatur of the Parliament. It was based only on a recommendation of the Cabinet Mission. "Their recommendation will remain in their mouths or on the printed paper. We shall have no authority even to order a constable if there is a row in the Constituent Assembly. This is a dangerous situation. There must be the imprimatur of the Parliament and real power in the Central Government, before we can make anything of the Constituent Assembly. The imprimatur of the Parliament would clear the way for the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly (by making the issue adjudicable) in case he wants to refer a point of major importance to the Federal Court for decision."

On June 25, at 8 a.m. Gandhiji went to attend the Working Committee meeting. He asked Pyarelal to read out the note which he had written to Cripps the previous night. It read, "I would far

rather not write this note.... In spite of the readiness... of the Working Committe to go in for the Constituent Assembly, I would not be able to advise the leap in the dark.... There is nothing but a vacuum after you throw all the commitments on the scrap heap, if you really do intend to do so.... The instructions to the Governors (issued by the Reforms office), innocuous as they have proved to be, have opened up a dreadful vista. I, therefore, propose to advise the Working Committee not to accept the long-term proposition without its being connected with the Interim Government. I must not act against my instinct...." He then addressed them very briefly: "I admit defeat. You are not bound to act upon my unsupported suspicion. You should follow the dictates of your reason." And he left. The Working Committee again met in the afternoon and addressed a letter to the Cabinet Mission, rejecting the proposal for the formotion of the Interim Government at the Centre and accepting the long-term plan, with its own interpretation of the disputed clauses. In spite of this, they insisted upon Gandhiji's attendance at the afternoon session. Gandhiji yielded to their pressure.

Later in the day the Cabinet Mission invited the members of the Working Committee to meet them. Not being a member, Gandhiji was not invited. The Mission solved the difficulty created by the Congress by ignoring the reservation in its resolution with regard to grouping. It "decided" that the Congress decision was an acceptance of their May 16 plan, and, therefore, both the Congress and the Muslim League had qualified to join in the formation of the Interim Government. They also postponed further negotiations between the two parties for the formation of such a Government.

Jinnah was of the view that the Congress had rejected the short-term proposal. The Cabinet Mission had earlier sent for him but instead of inviting him to form the Interim Government without the Congress, as he had expected, informed him that according to their view, both the Congress and the Muslim League having accepted the May 16 plan, they had both qualified to participate in the Interim Government. Their view was that if either the Congress or the Muslim League would not consent to come into the Coalition Government, the plan of the Coalition Government failed as it would no longer be a coalition and

they should have to find some other Interim Government of those who accepted the scheme of May 16. The Congress, having accepted the May 16 statement, was entitled to be invited to form the Government as the biggest political organisation in the country. Accordingly, on June 26, the Mission issued a statement to the effect that since it had not been found possible to form the Interim Coalition Government on the basis of the June 16 proposals, in accordance with para 8 of the proposals, further efforts for the formation of the Interim Government would be resumed after a short break and they returned home (England), leaving Wavell to continue the efforts for the formation of an Interim Government. In the meantime, the elections to the Constituent Assembly would take place.

Before the Mission left, Jinnah had demanded that since the formation of an Interim Government had been shelved, the election to the Constituent Assembly should also be postponed. When that demand was turned down by the Cabinet Delegation, he accused them of a flagrant "breach of faith".

The League Council met and, on July 29, withdrew its previous acceptance of the May 16 plan of the Cabinet Mission. It further decided to launch "Direct Action" to achieve Pakistan and "to organise the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when necessary". August 16 was declared as the "Direct Action Day" to be observed all over India.

# 32

# Interim Government

A WEEK before the "Direct Action" resolution of the Muslim League, the Viceroy resumed his efforts for the formation of a coalition Interim Government at the Centre. On July 22 in a "Personal and Confidential" letter to both Jawaharlal, who in the meantime had succeeded Maulana Azad as the Congress President, and to Jinnah, he set forth his formula for the same. The letter reiterated the assurance that "His Majesty's Government would treat the new Interim Government with the same close consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government", and "give to the Indian Government the greatest possible freedom in the exercise of the day-to-day administration of the country". Further, "it will not be open to either the Congress or the Muslim League to object to names submitted by the other party, provided they are accepted by the Viceroy." This meant that the Congress could now nominate one or more nationalist Muslims in the Interim Government.

Jawaharlal informed the Viceroy in reply that he was unable to co-operate in the formation of a Government as suggested by him. The question of the status and the power of the Interim Government had first to be decided in unambiguous language. Nothing more followed from the Viceroy for a fortnight. But the "Direct Action" resolution passed by the Muslim League and the withdrawal of its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan remained. On August 6, the Viceroy, acting under instructions

from London, invited Nehru, the Congress President, to submit proposals for the formation of the Interim Government. He further wrote: "It will be for you to consider whether you should first discuss them with Mr. Jinnah; if you were able to reach an agreement with him, I should naturally be delighted."

In view of the resolution adopted by the Muslim League and the statements made on its behalf, the best course, Jawaharlal wrote to the Viceroy, would be to make a public announcement to the effect that he had invited the President of the Congress to form the Provisional Government and that the latter had accepted his invitation. "It will then be possible for us to approach the Muslim League and invite its co-operation," he added.

The Viceroy accepted Jawaharlal's suggestion. On August 12 the Viceroy made the necessary announcement. After this Nehru made another attempt to woo Jinnah. The reception he got from him was disappointing.

Hardly had the letter of invitation to Jawaharlal left the Viceroy's house when he regretted his action. He tried to recall his letter but was informed that it was too late. Thereafter, his own effort was concentrated on making it difficult for the Congress Government to function freely. He wanted anyhow to bring the League into the Interim Government.

In submitting his proposals for the formation of the Interim Government, Jawaharlal had pressed for the number of members in the new Cabinet to be raised from 14 to 15 for the efficient discharge of their functions as also to enable a representative of the Anglo-Indian community to be included. But the Viceroy objected on the ground that it would make the League's joining the Government more difficult. He said, "The matter of paramount importance is to leave no stone unturned to get the Muslim League to join the Executive Council." Nehru took strong exception to this as also to the Interim Government being referred to as the "Executive Council". In the official announcement made in that behalf, it had been referred to as the "Interim Government". Why this reversion to the old designation? This was obviously to please Jinnah. Evidently there was no reply to this protest by Jawaharlal. Jawaharlal had no choice left but to submit the list of twelve members of the Interim Government. Two names were left

to be filled by the League if and when they joined the Government. The list was accepted by the British Government and an announcement to this effect was made on August 24. The new Government took office on September 2. The following were the personnel of the Government:

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
3. Dr. Rajendra Prasad
4. Sri Asaf Ali
5. Sri C. Rajagopalachari
6. Sri Sarat Chandra Bose
7. Dr. John Matthai
8. Sardar Baldev Singh
9. Sir Shaffaat Ahmed Khan
10. Sri Jagjivan Ram
11. Syed Ali Zaheer
12. Sri Cooverji Hormusji Bhabha

The next day, a fanatic Muslim youth stabbed and seriously wounded Sir Shaffaat Ahmed Khan who had the temerity to accept the nomination from the Congress.

We are anticipating events in order to complete the account of the way in which the Interim Government functioned and the Viceroy's attitude towards it. After the Calcutta killing, Gandhiji had an interview with the Viceroy on August 27. After the interview in a letter to the Viceroy he wrote, "During our interview last evening, you repeated that you were a plain man and a soldier and that you did not know the law. Being a representative of the King you cannot afford to be a military man only, nor to ignore the law which is of your own making. You should be assisted by a legal man enjoying your confidence. You threatened not to convene the Constituent Assembly if the formula placed by you before Pandit Nehru and me was not acted upon by the Congress. If such was the case, you should not have made the announcement of August 12 inviting the Congress President to make proposals for the immediate formation of the Interim Government. Even now you should recall your action and form the Ministry enjoying your confidence. It is our purpose to devise methods to prevent a repetition of the recent terrible happen-

ings in Calcutta. The question before us is how best to do it."

Gandhiji advised the Viceroy to resign and had a telegraphic message conveyed to the British Government that in his opinion the Viceroy was unnerved owing to the Bengal tragedy and needed to be assisted by "an abler and legal mind", otherwise "the repetition of the Bengal tragedy was a certainty".

During the course of the Calcutta killing, Wavell refused to intervene on the plea of Provincial autonomy. In his broadcast on the Interim Government on August 24, he even went out of his way to give an assurance that his Government had neither the power nor the desire to trespass on the field of the Provincial Administration. He conveniently ignored the fact that the Government of India was yet a unitary government functioning under the Act of 1935. One wonders why Jawaharlal who, having named the members of his cabinet, would have been the virtual Prime Minister in the Interim Government, should have chosen to accept office under such limitations. Such action might have created a crisis but it would have been worth it.

Wavell also told the Congress leaders that they should be prepared "in the interest of communal harmony" to reverse their previous decision in regard to the provinces exercising "option" in the matter of joining groups and sections, and to accept the "intention" of the statement of May 16. Not only that, but during his talks with the Congress leaders, he even held out the threat that if the Congress did not accept his formula, the Constituent Assembly might not be summoned. One cannot understand why Wavell wanted the Congress to accept the "intention" of the Mission's statement. It was on the basis of this implied acceptance by the Congress that it was invited to form the Interim Government.

The newly formed Interim Government had begun functioning from September 2, 1946. But the pro-League British officials felt that their creation, the Muslim League, had overplayed its cards by remaining out of the Interim Government. They were determined to bring it in at any cost. It was well known that the British Cabinet had decided that the Interim Government was for all practical purposes to be allowed to function as a Cabinet, and any further members could be brought in only on Nehru's invitation.

This was also Gandhiji's view and that of many others. At almost every meeting of Nehru with the Viceroy, the latter pressed him to bring in the League. On one occasion, the report goes, under Wavell's nagging Nehru was provoked into making the remark : "You may do so, I won't." Wavell and his advisers, it is believed, took advantage of this. They opened direct and secret negotiations with Jinnah for the League's entry. If this report was true, it would show that in a huff Jawaharlal could forget the high and responsible position he was then holding.

Jinnah presented nine "demands" as a basis for the League's entry into the Government. They were that the Viceroy's Executive Council be strictly limited to fourteen members—six Hindu Congressmen, including one Scheduled Caste member, five League Muslims and three representatives of the minorities—with the explicit denial of the Congress right to appoint a nationalist Muslim; that vacancies be filled by the Viceroy in consultation with both the parties; that the League be given a veto over all Council decisions on communal questions; that the Vice-Presidency of the Council of Ministers should rotate between the Congress and the League (Jawaharlal was the Vice-President of the Council, the Viceroy being the President); that the major portfolios be distributed equally; and that no changes be made in their allocation without the agreement of both the parties.

On October 5, Nehru had a very full and, as he fancied, friendly talk with Jinnah at the Nawab of Bhopal's residence and again on the 7th. But on the latter date, he was surprised to receive a letter from Jinnah which was not only at variance with the spirit and drift of their previous talk, but Jinnah had appended to it an exact copy of his letter to the Viceroy with his demands, which the Viceroy in his letter of October 4 had conceded in part. But whereas the Congress was prepared to concede the substance of those points raised by the Muslim League on its own initiative, as Gandhiji had suggested, the Viceroy had conceded the same without even consulting the Congress, not even Nehru. On October 15, it was announced that the Muslim League had agreed to enter the Interim Government at the Viceroy's invitation. The League part of the Interim Government thus virtually became the nominees of the Viceroy. The induction of the League into the Interim Government at the instance of the Viceroy and after what had happened in

Calcutta was most unfortunate. Jinnah had not given up any of his nine demands. This meant that the League was both in the Government and in Opposition. It created many difficulties in the functioning of the Government. There was no unity or joint responsibility. It is a sad commentary on our ability to view important events in their proper perspective. The failure of the Coalition Interim Government, in my view, paved the way for the partition of the country.

This step was taken without any prior discussion in the Working Committee. It was accepted by the Congress leaders in the Government. This was the foretaste of things to come—not the organisation but the Government it had put in power was the Congress !

At this stage we would like to go back a little in time and record the events leading to the election of Jawaharlal as the President to succeed the Maulana. The Working Committee meeting held in Calcutta from December 7 to 11, 1945 decided to hold the session of the Congress in the first week of April 1946. Proposals were invited by the A.I.C.C. office for the election of the President. April 29 was fixed as the last day for receiving the proposals. Three names were duly proposed by the provinces—those of Sardar Patel, Pattabhi and mine. Jawaharlal's name had not been proposed.

Gandhiji had earlier expressed a wish that at that juncture Jawaharlal should be the President. What reasons impelled Gandhiji to recommend his name were not mentioned, so far as I remember. The final date for the proposals to be received by the A.I.C.C. office was drawing near. Only fifteen members of the All India Congress Committee are required to propose the name of the President. A meeting of the Working Committee was being held in Delhi a few days earlier. I sent a paper round, proposing the name of Jawaharlal. The members of the Working Committee signed it and also some local members of the All India Congress Committee. It was thus that the name of Jawaharlal was proposed for the presidentship. The others thereupon withdrew their names. It was certain that if Jawaharlal's name had not been proposed, the Sardar would have been elected as the President. The Sardar did not like my intervention. I have since wondered if, as the General Secretary, I should have been instrumental in proposing Jawahar-

lal's name in deference to Gandhiji's wishes in the matter. But I did not think that the matter was of very great importance. The President of the Congress is the Chairman of the Working Committee. He is first among equals. No important issue can be decided except by the Working Committee. Also, I did not think that independence, in whatever form it might come, was round the corner. I thought that we had many more struggles ahead. But who can forecast the future? On such seemingly trivial accidents depends the fate of men and even of nations. The assassination of an Austrian prince led to the holocaust of World War I.

About Jawaharlal's election, the Maulana in his book *India Wins Freedom* writes that he (the Maulana) had been President for seven years. He adds, "I, therefore, decided I should not permit my name to be proposed." The Maulana seems to have forgotten the constitution of the Congress. The consent of the person proposed is not required. The proposals come from the provinces. The Maulana had not issued any public statement about not seeking re-election.

Further, the Maulana writes, "The next point which I had to decide was the choice of my successor." Here also the Maulana has made an over-statement. No out-going President has ever suggested his successor's name. Even when sometimes Gandhiji indicated his preference, he did it from the names which were proposed. The Maulana writes, "I was anxious that the next President should be one who agreed with my point of view and would carry out the same policy as I had pursued.... I came to the conclusion that Jawaharlal should be the new President." I have never known any President deciding the basic policies of the Congress. They are decided by the session of the Congress. When for any reason the session of the Congress cannot meet, they are decided by the A.I.C.C. If in an emergency the A.I.C.C. cannot meet, decisions are taken by the Working Committee. But in that case such decisions must be confirmed by the session of the Congress or the A.I.C.C. The Congress President is the Chairman of the Working Committee.

Further, the Maulana writes, "I issued a statement on 26th April, 1946, proposing his [Jawaharlal's] name." I cannot understand how the name of the President can be proposed by the issue of a statement by any man, however eminent he may be in the Congress. As I have

said before, the proposals could come only from 15 A.I.C.C. members. I have also described how Jawaharlal's name came to be proposed. The Maulana also writes that Gandhiji had perhaps a preference for Vallabhbhai. I would not have taken upon myself the task of getting 15 signatories for Jawaharlal if I had known that Gandhiji was inclined to favour Vallabhbhai's name as successor to the Maulana. Apart from this, it is on record that the Maulana did not want to resign to give place even to Jawaharlal. It was at the insistence of Gandhiji that he consented to resign. And it is also on record that Gandhiji in his letter to the Maulana had suggested Jawaharlal's name. It is, therefore, difficult to understand how the Maulana could have forgotten all this.

It may be that after Jawaharlal's name had been duly proposed as related by me, the Maulana might have issued a statement asking people to vote for him. If he did so, it was superfluous as the three other candidates whom the Maulana had mentioned withdrew from the contest as soon as Jawaharlal's name was duly proposed.

As I have written about Jawaharlal's election, I may as well write here of my election as Congress President to succeed him. As soon as the Interim Government was formed, it was felt that the same person could not be in the Government and also be the President of the Congress. Therefore, fresh elections were ordered. Three names were proposed, those of Maulana Azad, Pattabhi and mine. As soon as it was felt that there was a possibility of my being elected, and it was known that Gandhiji and the Sardar favoured my candidature, Jawaharlal went to Gandhiji and said that Kripalani's name should not be approved of by him. Gandhiji asked him for his reasons. He said that I had a bad temper. Gandhiji asked him: "What about your temper ? Kripalani is a seasoned soldier. He will rise to the requirements of the high office." Also, Mridula Sarabhai who had been made the General Secretary in my place, when Jawaharlal became the President, approached Gandhiji with the same request. Her reason was that the Muslims did not trust me. Gandhiji asked her to talk to Jawaharlal. Dr. Syed Mahmud and Yunus, who is now serving in the foreign department and who was then living with Jawaharlal, also approached Gandhiji with the request that my candidature should not be supported by him as I had a communal bias. They too were asked to approach

Jawaharlal. Gandhiji knew that Jawaharlal had no such opinion about me. This was a serious charge against a Congressman. I was called by Gandhiji and asked why such an opinion about me prevailed in the minds of some Muslims. I told Gandhiji that it was all on his account. In an educational conference held at Meerut I had said that his (Gandhiji's) programme of work and all his plans were integrated. They could not be put into separate compartments. This was interpreted by some Urdu papers as an invitation to a new faith. They also wrote that the Muslims were invited to put on a Gandhi cap and wear a loin cloth. It did not occur to them that I myself neither wore a Gandhi cap nor a loin cloth. Gandhiji told me that in that case I must issue a statement. This I did. In the statement I said that what Gandhiji was asking the nation to adopt was an ideology and not a religion. He himself did not claim that he was preaching a new religion. The Maulana and Pattabhi withdrew their candidatures and I was elected President on October 22, 1946, but I took charge at the open session in Meerut (U.P.) on November 23, 1946. In the meantime, I had to go to Noakhali in connection with the riots and, if possible, to bring about amity between the two communities.

# 33

# On A Peace Mission

To resume our narrative. We said earlier that the League Council had met on July 29, 1946 and, among other things, had decided to launch "Direct Action" to achieve Pakistan and "to organise the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when necessary". The 16th of August was declared as the "Direct Action Day". Some League leaders also declared that in choosing their methods of action they were not inhibited by non-violence. Feroz Khan Noon, while addressing the League legislators' meeting, said, "The havoc that the Muslims would play would put to shame what Changez Khan and Halaku did." The League leaders started making full-scale preparations. The British remained amused spectators. Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal, was an efficient, unscrupulous and ruthless person. He declared August 16 a public holiday. He and his companions saw to it that Muslim hooligans were mobilised and supplied with firearms and other lethal weapons. Arrangements were also made for transporting hooligans from other places. Petrol coupons for hundreds of gallons were issued to the ministers for this purpose. (Rationing of petrol introduced during the war was still in force.) The Mayor of Calcutta, a Leaguer, the Secretary of the Muslim League and a notorious M.L.A., Sharif Khan, a close associate of the Chief Minister, openly organised the hooligans in Howrah. The Chief Minister, who held the portfolio of law and order, had systematically transferred the Hindu police

officers from 22 out of 24 police stations in Calcutta and replaced them by Muslim officers. The remaining two police stations were under Anglo-Indians. Thus the stage was set for the "Great Calcutta.Killing". It started on the 16th morning. A huge procession of thousands of armed men, carrying League flags and raising deafening cries of "Ladke Lenge Pakistan" ("We will fight and take Pakistan"), started from Howrah towards Calcutta. Their passage through the roads and streets of the city created terror. A huge rally was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister and inflammatory speeches were made against the Hindus. (The quarrel could have been, if at all, with the Congress and not with the Hindu community. But in that case it could not have been given the character of a religious war, *jehad.*) After the dispersal of the meeting began killing, looting, arson, rape and other unspeakable forms of crime. Life in Calcutta was paralysed within hours. For two days this orgy swept over the city unchecked. The authorities not only initiated the trouble but also actively participated in it. The Chief Minister installed himself in the police control room, overriding the orders of the officers of his own choice. He also ordered immediate release of rioters wherever they were arrested. Complaints about the Chief Minister's scandalous conduct reached the Governor, but he remained unconcerned, though he belonged to the Labour party of England!

On the third day, the Hindus, failing to get any protection from the Government, including the Governor, were compelled to organise resistance in self-defence. After that started indiscriminate retaliation. It was only then that the Governor thought of calling in the military. For two days not a shot had been fired when the Muslim goondas were in the ascendancy. We have already noted the Viceroy's attitude of non-interference in provincial matters.

It was estimated that 5,000 men, women and children were killed and 15,000 injured. The streets of Calcutta were strewn with dead bodies that lay unattended for days. The manholes were choked with corpses. A British correspondent, Kim Christen, wrote in *The Statesman* (an Anglo-Indian paper then): "I have a stomach made strong by the experience of war but war was never like this. This is not a riot. It needs a word found in mediaeval history, a fury. Yet 'fury' sounds spontaneous and there must have been some deliberation and organisation to see this fury on the way. Hordes who

ran about battering and killing with eight-foot-long lathis, may have found them lying about or brought them out of their pocket, but it is hard to believe." We have already commented on the bands who found it easy to get petrol and vehicles and roam about, when no others were permitted on the streets. It is not mere supposition that men were imported into Calcutta to help in making an impression. A leading article in *The Statesman* appeared under the heading "Disgrace Abounding". The Muslim leaders' plan in Calcutta miscarried. The Hindus retaliated with equal ferocity. It was not a one-way affair as expected.

The Muslim leaders then raised the cry that Calcutta must be avenged. It could only be in a place where the Hindus were in a minority.

On October 10, 1946 riots broke out in Noakhali. Alarming rumours reached us in Delhi of terrible atrocities committed on the Hindus in that area. There were reports of murders, destruction of property, kidnapping, molestation of women, forced marriages and conversion on a large scale. All this was being done with the active support of the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal. It was known that an organisation, working under the name of the Muslim National Guards, had been active for the past many months in the area. They had been terrorising, molesting and forcibly extracting money from the Hindus. The Hindus were made to pay contributions even for the Muslim League. Against this background fresh rumours of large-scale atrocities caused deep concern to all of us. No news was coming through. The Government was unconcerned. Gandhiji in one of his prayer-meetings announced that the President-elect of the Congress would go there and see things for himself and do what could be done under the circumstances. He also said if need be he would die there. I had been elected President only a few days earlier but had not yet assumed office. I was not present at the prayer-meeting.* What Gandhiji had said was conveyed to me. I met Gandhiji. He asked me to proceed to Noakhali forthwith. Sucheta insisted on accompanying me and with great reluctance Gandhiji allowed her.**

*I rarely attended Gandhiji's prayer-meetings. I did not believe in public prayers though I understood the reasons behind Gandhiji's congregational prayers.

**Years after, I came to know that she had taken arsenic with her.

We flew to Calcutta and were the guests of Sarat Chandra Bose. On my arrival the Press asked me about my plans. I told them: "My first duty is to exert my utmost in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity." Sarat Chandra was as ignorant of the happenings in East Bengal as anybody else, including the Press. No one had so far succeeded in reaching the actual riot-affected areas. The Muslim hooligans had systematically cut the roads and stopped the boatmen from ferrying the Hindus across. (The boatmen were all Muslims.) A few brave souls had tried to enter the area to help their friends and relatives. They either met with death or returned wounded.

An important leader of Bengal belonging to the Charkha Sangh was in Delhi. When Gandhiji made the announcement that I would go to Noakhali, he told Gandhiji that he would manage to gather information regarding the happenings in Noakhali. He had preceded me to Calcutta. I naturally thought he would help me. I got in touch with him. He told me that he had sent two young men to the area, with instructions that if one were killed, the other would return to give him the report. He urged me to proceed at once to Noakhali as Gandhiji had said that the "President of the Congress should go and die there". I told my dear friend that I had no intention of dying yet. If I had to die I would choose a healthier place than East Bengal.* I had come to do a piece of work, which I would endeavour to do. I then asked him if he would accompany me as I had very little knowledge of the area. He said he would follow later. Sarat Babu was willing to accompany me but he suggested that we should first meet the Governor who was then in Chittagong. On October 19 we flew to Chittagong, making a short halt at the Comilla airstrip. Thousands of refugees fleeing from the riot-affected areas had taken refuge there. Leading citizens of Comilla and some prominent refugees met us at the airport and acquainted us with the happenings. This was the first time we got any authentic report.

When we met the Governor, he appeared to be quite unconcerned and at ease. The Chief Minister also happened to be there. The Governor said that the Chief Minister had reported to him that everything was under control and peace and order had been res-

*I am afraid that in situations of communal conflict, Gandhiji could think only in terms of martyrdom. Gandhiji had a fascination for the Cross.

tored. When we talked of kidnapping of Hindu women by the Muslims, his laconic reply was that that was inevitable, as the Hindu women there were more handsome than Muslim women. I felt like hitting him but I restrained myself. This was the reply of a representative of the Labour Government, F. Burrows, who himself was a railwayman! Even he had changed his skin when he came to India as a ruler! After we had met the Governor, Sarat Babu said that there was nothing more we could do without help from the authorities. Neither the Governor nor the Chief Minister wanted us to go to Noakhali. Without their help, Sarat said, we would be stranded there. After three hours' stay we started back for Calcutta. Suhrawardy wanted a lift in our plane and he came along with us. We were flying low. At several places we could see smoke spiralling up from the villages, though it was afternoon. We pointed out to him this evidence of continuing arson and lawlessness. But he was quite unaffected. He was behaving like a schoolboy on a spree, taking photographs with his camera.

After returning to Calcutta I was in a fix. I had only heard stories of the atrocities committed but had seen nothing. What would I tell Gandhiji and the people? I, therefore, decided to fly back, this time directly to the riot-affected areas. Sarat Babu could not accompany us. Sri Bhagirath Kanoria, Secretary of the Marwari Relief Committee, offered to come. We also took with us a young man from Santiniketan, Dhiren Dutt. We again stopped at the Comilla airstrip, visited all the refugee camps in the town and secured first-hand reports. We then proceeded by train to Chaumuhani, the railway station in Noakhali nearest to the riot-affected villages. Here I met Lt.-General F.R.R. Bucher, G.O.C. of the Eastern Command. I wanted to know from him what he proposed to do. But his behaviour was so insolent that I left him. I got no information about what the military wanted to do. This was the man who became afterwards the first Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of free India! He then wrote a letter of apology to me for his rude behaviour! Pakistan could do without such help from imperial quarters, but we could not! As I learned afterwards from Indian military officers, he was against our taking action to help the Maharaja of Kashmir against the marauders from the North-West Frontier helped by the Pakistan

Army. Chaumuhani was free from rioting. Therefore, we had to trek into the interior to reach the actual riot-affected villages. We first visited Haimchar in the Tipperah district and then Dattapara in Noakhali. Haimchar presented a picture of complete devastation. The bazar, the residential area and every bit of this one-time prosperous village were razed to the ground. Frightened, utterly hopeless, men and women surrounded us with terrible tales of their woes. They never thought any help would or could reach them. We had to undertake a very difficult journey because there were no roads but only narrow paths. We had to walk a greater part of the way. The streams and rivulets with which East Bengal is studded had to be crossed by *sanko. Sanko* is some kind of bridge made of one or more bamboos tied together. It could be crossed by one man at a time. While crossing one of these bridges I tumbled into the water. The water in these rivulets is not deep. I had to complete the rest of the journey in wet clothes. On return from Haimchar we proceeded to Dattapara, situated about 25 km. from Chaumuhani. This was a large village on the fringe of the riot-affected villages. Dattapara itself had escaped destruction. Thousands of people from the adjoining villages had collected there for shelter. The zamindars of that village, the Guha family, in their generosity had opened for the refugees their cluster of houses with a large compound. They had also placed their granary at the disposal of about 6,000 refugees who had collected there. We heard from them harrowing tales of loot, arson, murder, rape, forced marriages, large-scale conversions and all sorts of humiliating and bestial conduct. Their cries to the Government for help and protection had gone unheeded. Here we learnt that a Hindu girl, Arati Sur, from the adjoining village of Panchgharia, was forcibly married to a Muslim boy, the nephew of the Chairman of the Union. Sucheta noted down the particulars of the case. On our return to Chaumuhani the Magistrate, one Mr. McInerny, met us. When we talked of this girl being kidnapped and forcibly married, he asserted that all such marriages were willingly contracted. Sucheta was sitting at a distance and listening to this conversation. She rose in great anger and challenged the statement of Mr. McInerny and gave him the particulars of this girl who was forcibly married and was living

in the house of the Union Chairman. This was known to everybody. Next day Mr. McInerny rescued the girl and brought her to our host's house. We were staying with Jogindra Mazumdar, a flourishing grain merchant of that area. His was the only house where people could get hospitality. Sucheta and I were to leave early next morning for Delhi to submit our report to Gandhiji and tell the public what had happened so that something could be done for the safety of the Hindu population. But during the night the local people said if I must go, Sucheta could be left to help them specially in rescuing girls. It was difficult to say 'no' to these harassed people. She agreed to stay back and I left for Delhi. I stayed in this area for four days. It was not possible for me to prolong my stay. I returned to Comilla and flew back to Calcutta. Within a couple of days Sucheta shifted her headquarters to Dattapara and started the work of helping the people.

Trouble in Noakhali was well planned by the League. It appeared to the League as the most suitable place for wreaking vengeance for what had happened in the later days of rioting in Calcutta. Muslims constituted 81 per cent of the population. The district was full of Maulanas, Maulvis and Hajis, some of whom had been brought from North India. Generally the Muslim population was poor and ignorant but their fanatical passions could be easily roused by their religious leaders. Yet all the Muslims were not under the influence of the League. There were Muslims who had protected their Hindu neighbours at the risk of the displeasure of their co-religionists. The brain behind the riots was a notorious M.L.A., Ghulam Sarwar. He had an organisation called the "Muslim National Guards" with whose help he had been oppressing and exploiting the local Hindus for a number of years. It was a Fascist organisation. The Hindus of that area were living under the terror of these National Guards. Following the Calcutta riots, Ghulam Sarwar, Maulvis and Maulanas started a further campaign of hatred against the Hindus. On September 7, 1946, at a meeting of the Ulemas and other Muslim League leaders, organised by Ghulam Sarwar, inflammatory speeches were made and it was announced by beat of drum that the Muslim population had "to devise ways and means to wreak vengeance for what the Muslims had suffered in Calcutta". At a meeting the next day in another village the mob was asked to wait for "instructions" of the League

"High Command". This meeting was followed by loot, arson, desecration of temples and humiliation of Hindus on a fairly wide scale. The panic-stricken people ran to the authorities, beseeching them to give protection. The Hindu Magistrate of the Noakhali district, in spite of his own uncertain position, had given them some protection earlier but had since then been transferred. The holocaust started on October 10, 1946. Organised and well-equipped bands surrounded the Hindu homes. The first victims were the leading Hindus and zamindars. The pattern was more or less uniform. They began by looting and burning the houses and killing the men-folk, raping and taking away the women. Maulanas and Maulvis often accompanied the mob. As soon as the work of the mob was over, there and then the Hindus were forcibly converted. In some villages regular classes were held to teach them the *kalma* and *ayats* from the Koran. During our visit to Dattapara we found a number of men who had been so converted and were compelled to take beef while in the custody of their captors.

Miss Muriel Lester, who visited Noakhali, later wrote to Gandhi-ji: "Not only the happenings here have given them the shock they are suffering from; it is the discovery that there is no safety, no protection, no moral law which is stronger than themselves...." She described the Muslim organisation there as "well planned, quite a Hitlerian network of folks".

When I returned to Calcutta there was recrudescence of communal rioting there. This caused me the greatest anxiety as I thought there might be a flare-up again in Noakhali and I had left Sucheta there unprotected. However, this time there was no reaction in Noakhali to the fresh rioting in Calcutta. The Press approached me and I gave a brief account of what I had seen. I also asked certain questions from the Bengal Government. To these there was no reply. I flew back to Delhi and made my reports to Gandhiji. He was most deeply distressed when he heard about the atrocities committed on women. When asked, "Can a woman be advised to take her own life rather than surrender?", he replied, "A woman would certainly take her own life rather than surrender." On October 27 he announced that he would go to Noakhali. Next day he left for Calcutta. He was detained in Calcutta for a week and proceeded to Noakhali on November 6, 1946 on his peace mission.

While in Calcutta news came of the riots in Bihar where the Muslims were the sufferers. His agony was great. To one of his friends in Calcutta he said, "My ahimsa will have to pass through an ordeal of fire this time."*

On hearing of the Bihar trouble, Gandhiji wanted to change his programme and proceed there immediately. But he was advised by Muslim friends that his presence was not immediately needed as other leaders had already arrived from Delhi. He, however, got in touch with the Central and Provincial Governments and asked them to do everything in their power to control the situation and give relief to the sufferers. In addition he resolved to go on a partial fast.

To continue our narration of events in Noakhali. So far none of the Ministers of the Centre or the State had visited the area. Shyama Prasad and N.C. Chatterjee had made a brief visit to Chaumuhani. On the way to Noakhali Gandhiji received various deputations both of Hindus and Muslims—the Muslims minimising and denying the happenings and the Hindus seeking redress and protection. At Chaumuhani, Sucheta and the local people met Gandhiji and gave him a report of the situation.

The life of the community was completely disorganised. Both the Hindus and the Muslims had suffered. Sucheta had started relief work for both the communities. Other social workers had also joined her by then. On receiving the report about the relief she was giving, Gandhiji asked if she was doing that without taking any work from those whom she helped. She said, "Yes." His reply was, "What you have done is wrong. These people have been deprived of their all; don't deprive them of their self-respect. Give them help only in lieu of work." She asked how she was to find work for so many. She also said, "If a destitute woman with a child in her arms comes to me, am I not to give her food and clothes immediately?" Gandhiji's reply was, "Turn your heart into stone and give her some work, however trivial it may be." He also did not approve of collecting the rescued families in camps, as had been done by her so far. He said: "We must not make cowards of the Hindus. They must stay in their own villages and our endeavour should be to create the necessary atmosphere of harmony to enable the two communities to live together."

*Quoted in P.C. Ghosh's *Mahatma Gandhi—As I Saw Him*, p. 212.

Gandhiji soon shifted to Dattapara. At the prayer-meeting there he started his work of peace. The Muslim League Ministry was outwardly helping him, but was covertly hostile to his visit. Gandhiji said, "I am faced with the severest and the most intricate problem of my life." He first visited the main centres of disturbances, acquainted himself with the situation, and met Hindus and Muslims in large numbers. He then decided that he should walk from village to village carrying his message of peace and goodwill. He wanted that all the Hindus who had left should go back to their homes and they should be welcomed by their Muslim neighbours. With this idea he instructed all the workers to spread out in the villages and lay down their lives if need be. He even sent the young ladies of his party to work alone in villages. He sent away even his Secretary Pyarelal. He walked from village to village barefoot. Once when Sucheta asked him why he could not wear chappals, he smiled and said, "It is proper for me to walk barefoot here." He added that he was doing penance for the wrongs done by his people. During his stay here, Nirmal Kumar Bose took leave from Calcutta University and stayed and worked with him as his Secretary.

As I had been in Noakhali I had some measure of the difficulties Gandhiji would have to face. He would have to face the physical difficulties of narrow paths and innumerable waterways, which could be crossed only by improvised bridges of a few bamboos tied together. He could reach the villages only on foot. To make matters worse, the miscreants invariably threw filth on the narrow paths. His companions had to remove the filth before Gandhiji could proceed on the way. But these physical difficulties were nothing when compared to the mental anguish he had to suffer. Local Muslim leaders would come and express their sorrow for what had happened. They would even promise to try and bring about peace and concord between the communities. But privately they would foment trouble. So far as the general Muslim population was concerned, it was conditioned not to believe in one God for the whole of humanity. The God of Islam, they had been taught by the Maulanas, was different from the God of all other religions. How could they be touched by Gandhiji's prayer-meetings where it was sung *Rama aur Rahim ek hain*, Rama and Rahim are one? That they considered

blasphemy. They objected to a Hindu reciting *ayats* from the Holy Koran. They did not believe even in the brotherhood of man. The only brotherhood they knew was that of Islam. Gandhiji could not even blame them. Unfortunately, he had gone in their midst after the Bihar riots. There the Muslims had suffered at the hands of the Hindus indignities like those suffered by the Hindus in Noakhali. They, therefore, often taunted Gandhiji and asked him to go to Bihar. I have said that in the atrocities committed on the Hindus, the Muslims were accompanied by Maulvis and Maulanas. They, therefore, erroneously thought that their violence, cupidity and lust were sanctified by religion.

If Gandhiji could not touch the hearts of the Muslims, he could not plant confidence among the Hindus. Whatever exhortations he might make, the Hindus, by and large, could not return to their homes. Gandhiji's non-violence, patience, tolerance and boundless trust in the goodness of human beings were put there, as he has himself said, to the "highest test". Yet his faith persisted. After a couple of months' stay there, as he was leaving for Bihar, he said he would come again to Noakhali and see that the Hindus and the Muslims lived like brothers.

What was needed in Noakhali was not a Hindu leader who was considered by the Muslims as their enemy number one. The need was for a Muslim leader, preferably a member of the Muslim League, who could have spoken to them with religious authority and told them that they had misconceived Islam. Islam believes that God is the God of the whole of humanity, howsoever He may be conceived by different people. This is plain from the very first sentence of the Koran where it says: *Rabb Ul Alamin*. But no Muslim leader from outside, whether belonging to the League or the Congress, ever visited Noakhali.

After a couple of months in Noakhali and in Tripura Gandhiji decided to go to Bihar. The Bihar riots had broken out in Chapra on November 25, 1946. From there they spread to other districts. It was not a sudden eruption. Communal tension had been growing for some time past. The Muslim League, infuriated at the success of the Congress Ministry, had let loose insidious propaganda of "atrocities" committed on the Muslim minority in the Congress-governed provinces. They also published a mendacious report

called the "Pirpur Report" which helped to inflame the sentiments of both Hindus and Muslims. This notorious report was so false that the President of the Bihar Muslim League told Rajen Babu "that 75 per cent was admitted to be false on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and the remaining 25 per cent has been proved false". Rajen Babu had offered to have the Muslim League complaints inquired into by the Chief Justice, Sir Maurice Gwyer, but it was turned down by Jinnah. Had such an enquiry been made, at least the false rumours could have been scotched.

Also, during the 'Quit India' movement there was a great upheaval in Bihar. At that time the attitude of the Muslim League was such that the general opinion was that it stood as a "barrier to the freedom struggle". This had made the Muslims unpopular.

In the Calcutta riots, as we have seen, at first the Muslims had the upper hand. The labouring class of Hindus from Bihar had greatly suffered at the hands of Muslim rioters. They brought with them harrowing accounts of their experience. This excited the anger of the Hindus. At this time a pamphlet purporting to have been issued by some League leader was distributed in Bihar. It contained instructions "to kill the Hindus". In the atmosphere of suspicion created by the Calcutta and Noakhali riots people were ready to believe anything. The Hindus believed that the Muslims were planning some mischief in Bihar. On top of this, an unfortunate incident occurred in Muzaffarpur towards the end of September. It was reported that a Hindu girl abducted from Calcutta was brought to Bihar and kept confined in the house of a local Muslim. The Hindus tried to persuade him to release the girl. Failing in this, the crowd went to search the house. But they found that the man had disappeared along with the girl. At this the crowd lost control and wreaked vengeance on the local Muslims by looting and burning their houses and killing some of them. The Hindu Mahasabha then took up the case of the girl and blamed the Congress Government for being indifferent to the rights of the Hindus. Unfortunately, even among some educated people an opinion had grown that the Government at the Centre could not act whenever there were communal tensions or riots. So far as the League Government in Bengal was concerned, it had helped the Muslim rioters. It roused itself only when the Hindus took action

on their own. In Bihar the Hindus being in the majority did not wait to be attacked by the Muslims.

It is a fact that, while the communal tempo was rising, neither the Congress Government nor the Governor there took suitable precautionary measures to see that the trouble did not spread. The Governor was away during the most crucial days of rioting. There was a conviction that the disgruntled British administrators, who had a special grouse against the Congress because of the 'Quit India' struggle, wanted to put Congress Governments in an embarrassing position through inaction. Most of the District Magistrates were British.

On the 24th, Diwali was to be celebrated by the Hindus as a "dark" Diwali, a mourning day, in sympathy with the sufferers in Bengal. In Chapra a local Muslim leader exhorted his followers to "rejoice" by illuminating their houses. On the 25th when a meeting was held by the Hindus to protest against the happenings in Bengal, riots broke out in all their intensity and ferocity and raged for five days. The pattern was the same as in Calcutta, Noakhali and North Punjab. The Hindu rioters indulged in arson, loot, murder and there were cases of molestation of women and even attempts at conversion. The death toll in Bihar was greater than in Noakhali. By the 27th local Congress leaders had rushed to the area and tried their best to pacify the crowds and give protection to the Muslims. The police had to resort to repeated firings. It was difficult for the Government and the Congress volunteers to control the rioting as it had spread to the vast rural areas. On the 28th the Chief Minister accompanied by Dr. Syed Mahmud toured the area. They were greatly shocked to see the havoc and destruction that had been caused. On the 31st they returned to Patna to find that there too rioting had broken out in the rural areas. Altogether six districts were affected.

Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Liaquat Ali rushed to Bihar on November 3. Rajen Babu and I followed on their heels. The Maulana also came. I went even though the Muslims there blamed me for exposing the happenings in Noakhali, and were angry with me. They forgot that long before I went to Noakhali the Bihari victims from Calcutta had spread wide their tale of woe and suffering. But in that communal frenzy it was not possible for those who suffered

to keep their heads. All of us undertook an intensive tour of the rural area to bring sanity among the maddened Hindus and, to give relief and protection to the Muslims. Jawaharlal, addressing a mammoth meeting in Patna, said: "It is a matter of shame for me to come down here and ask you to observe the basic principles of civilised conduct when so many problems, national and international, are facing us that need solution.... By no standard of civilised conduct can acts of lawlessness and killing of neighbours be justified. There can be no justification for stooping to bestiality, simply because some fellows have lost their heads elsewhere...." I myself had said at another meeting: "By indulging in such acts, you have only helped your enemies inside and outside the country and have proved traitors to the country's cause."

*The Statesman* wrote: "Bihar, however, has at least been relatively fortunate in this, that the services of more eminent personages have been promptly available to her than to forlorn Bengal in her several earlier afflictions. The Governor's absence at the critical time has indeed evoked remark. But among the influential visitors from the Centre, Pandit Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Kripalani have all been trenchant and unsparing in denunciation of barbarities wrought by their co-religionists upon a minority weak in numbers." The Bihar disturbances were brought under control by November 8.

Gandhiji reached Patna on March 7, 1947 from Noakhali and stayed there till the 30th, when he left for Delhi as he wanted to meet the new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten. He returned after a fortnight and continued to stay in Bihar till May 24.

Gandhiji's task in Bihar was not as arduous and frustrating as in Noakhali. Here the Government, though it was caught unawares, was soon active, but not before great damage had been done. It was not a communal Government that was celebrating the "Direct Action Day" against the Hindus to secure Pakistan. It was not in the power of the Congress or the Hindus to give the Muslims Pakistan. The foreign imperial Government had not yet relinquished the stranglehold on the country.

Soon the Central Interim National Government became alert. The League Ministers in the Central Government were now greatly concerned as this time the Muslims were the sufferers and they wanted to give them protection. As we have stated above, Liaquat

Ali had rushed to Bihar. So far as the Congress leaders in the Central Government and the Organisation were concerned, they had at once rushed to Bihar to see that peace was restored and the displaced Muslims returned to their homes.The Viceroy no more prevented the Central Government from acting on the plea of provincial autonomy. Though the Hindus in Bihar had committed unspeakable atrocities on the Muslims, they had some faith in Congress leaders. They looked upon Gandhiji with reverence. They knew what he had done in Champaran. Rajendra Babu was their beloved leader. Jawaharlal was the darling of the nation. I had served in Bihar for many years and had worked with Gandhiji in Champaran. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was greatly respected by Hindus as a national leader. Dr. Syed Mahmud belonged to Bihar. When we rebuked the people for what they had done, they did feel ashamed. We had never been afraid of the opinion of the orthodox among the Hindus as the Muslims were. Even nationalist Muslims were apprehensive of the orthodox opinion in their community.

Then there was another difference between Bihar and Noakhali. Those who raided Muslim houses were not accompanied by Sadhus and Sannyasis. Even the worst criminals among the Hindu rioters could not claim religious sanction for their atrocities. They were not fighting a *jehad* as the Muslims were doing in Calcutta, Noakhali and the North under the leadership of the League. It was collective revenge coupled with the apprehension that if they did not take the offensive, there would be no protection for them. Most of the District Magistrates there, as we have said, were British. They had to maintain law and order but the Hindus felt that they would afford them no protection if ever the Muslims attacked them.

While the Hindus in Noakhali could not get encouragement from Gandhiji's visit to return to their homes, the same cannot be said of the Muslims in Bihar. Within a week of his arrival, after having met and talked to the leaders and people in authority, Gandhiji started to visit the rural areas and the pockets of major disturbances. Wherever he went, he not only held public meetings, but also visited the homes of the Muslims, carrying his message of peace and goodwill to them. He castigated the Hindus for their barbarism and tried to give solace and comfort to the Muslims. He was endeavouring to work for a psychological change which would enable

the Hindus and the Muslims to continue to live in peace. Within a few days there was a marked change for the better and things began settling down. Many Hindus in a repentant mood came to Gandhiji and gave in writing that they were penitent and were willing to do anything that he would advise them to do by way of atonement. At places the Hindus, at his suggestion, went to the camps and brought back Muslim families to their village homes. Hindus contributed funds for the rehabilitation of Muslim refugees. Hindu women donated their ornaments to Gandhiji for the purpose and fed and looked after Muslims. Abdul Ghaffar Khan joined him and toured the areas. He was so greatly loved and respected by the Hindus that he could, with complete frankness and authority, speak to both the communities, and he was not sparing in his remarks against the Hindus.

The work of relief and rehabilitation that was going on was now placed under a Muslim Minister, Abdul Qayum Ansari. Gandhiji's work was, however, made difficult by the attitude of the Muslim League workers. The Government of Bihar, as a gesture of goodwill, had handed over the camps to be run by the volunteers of the League. Soon the camps became the hot-beds of intrigue, and the work of rehabilitation was hampered greatly as they prevailed upon the refugees not to go back to their homes. The Muslim League Ministry of Bengal also did all in its power to prevent the Muslim refugees from returning to their homes in Bihar. They wanted to draw as large a number of Bihari refugees as possible to Bengal in order to settle them in the bordering districts where the Hindus were in a majority.

In the latter half of March there was a police strike in Bihar over the conviction of a Havildar in a case of contempt of court. The leader of the strikers, Ramanand Tiwari, who had resigned from the police force and joined the freedom struggle in 1942, was absconding. Gandhiji, since his coming to Bihar, had felt that the police in the State needed to be reformed. Communalism had infiltrated into the force. One section connived at the misdeeds of the Hindus and the other was organised by the Muslim League and was controlled by it. Tiwari was under the influence of the Socialist Party. He had considerable influence over the entire force. Some representatives of the policemen met Gandhiji to acquaint him with their grievances.

Gandhiji advised them to maintain discipline. They were the members of an essential service organisation and the Government was their own. Their grievances could be looked into. He also told them that there was no loss of dignity in surrender. In pursuance of this advice, Tiwari surrendered and was given ten years' rigorous imprisonment. The sentence was later reduced on appeal.

The Bihar disturbances helped Jinnah to further his idea of the partition of the country. He now even talked of the transfer of population. But he was soon persuaded to refrain from such talk by high British officials.

Gandhiji desired that a judicial inquiry be held into both the Bengal and the Bihar riots, but neither the Bengal Government nor Mountbatten was agreeable. So the idea was dropped.

Such large-scale communal disturbances unnerved the people and affected the thinking of the leaders. An opinion began to grow that the Muslim League would see to it that there was no peace in India until the country was partitioned. The situation created in the N.-W.F.P. and the Punjab had become serious. Riots broke out first in the N.-W.F.P. in March 1946 and thereafter spread to the whole of the Punjab. In May 1947 I went to Kashmir to talk to Sheikh Abdullah in jail and to persuade the Maharaja to release him. Sucheta again accompanied me on this trip. On our way to Kashmir we stopped at Lahore and from there went up to Rawalpindi. At Lahore many friends came and anxiously enquired as to what would happen in the future. We found intense apprehension among the Hindus because the Muslim leaders were openly and boastfully talking of using violence against the Hindus. A leading Muslim lady was reported to have said that such a conflagration would be started in Lahore that the leaders sitting in Delhi would see the flames. In the Rawalpindi district, we found widespread destruction. Every Hindu and Sikh public building in that city had been turned into a refugee camp. Thousands had deserted their villages to take shelter there. The Chairman of the Municipality, who was our host, took us round the camps as well as to the interior villages. We found village after village completely deserted by the Hindus and Sikhs, their houses ransacked and a large number of men and women killed. We saw a house where the children from the village had collected and which had been

set on fire. We saw the bones of the little ones.

In a village called Thoa Khalsa after a prolonged fight between Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other, when all men belonging to the Sikh and Hindu communities were killed, seventy-four women and girls and children decided to save their honour by jumping into the well of a house where they had all collected for safety. Led by the wife of the owner of the house, Smt. Lajwanti, all of them jumped into the well after reciting *Japji.* We were shown the well and given photographs showing it full of dead bodies.*

We learnt that all this was not spontaneous but the work of an elaborate organisation set up by Muslim League workers; the men were equipped with arms, petrol and lethal weapons. Some of them even brought with them trucks and camels to carry away the loot. Many of the Hindus and Sikhs were ex-army men.

In one village we heard that the rioters were preceded by some young men who put up chalk marks on the doors of some of the shops in the bazar. Next day when the rioting took place, the shops belonging to Muslims were left out while those marked were looted and burnt. We were informed that when some local leaders approached a highly placed British official for protection, he said, "Go to Gandhi, he will come to your help." From there I proceeded to Kashmir but Sucheta remained behind and again went to the rural areas to collect further facts to report to Gandhiji. Subsequently she joined me in Kashmir.

In Kashmir my task was difficult. The Dewan Kak was married to an English lady. She was constantly in and out of the British Residency. The majority of the officials were Kashmiri pandits. It was difficult to convince them that their interests were identical with those of the majority Muslim population. Kak's own elder brother belonged to the Hindu Mahasabha. It was not possible to arrange a meeting with the Maharaja without the presence of the Dewan. The Muslim population was excited. Their cry was for the Maharaja to quit. I addressed a crowded meeting in the principal mosque of Srinagar. What I said was appreciated. In another meeting I rebuked the agitators for raising the slogan "Quit Dogra". I said that the Maharaja was not a foreigner; he belonged to the State. Moreover, the Congress policy was not to displace the Indian princes but to

*Pyarelal : *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, pp. 387-88.

make them constitutional heads in a democracy.

In three days' time the Maharaja departed for Jammu. We had been able to arrange an interview with him through his pious Maharani. We followed the Maharaja to Jammu. He invited us to lunch and after lunch he was good enough to meet me alone and in private. I suppose that this was the first time that anybody with a political mission met the Maharaja without the presence of Kak. I pleaded for the release of the Sheikh. I also told him that if he did not join the Indian Union at that time, he would have trouble afterwards. He listened to what I had to say. About Sheikh Abdullah he said that he always created trouble and could not be released. About joining the Indian Union, he was non-committal.

I made my report of the visit to Gandhiji. Jawaharlal was too busy to enquire about what had happened during my visit to Kashmir, though as President I was fulfilling the task which he had left unfinished when he was arrested by the Maharaja's Government on entering Kashmir and released on the intervention of the Viceroy for the negotiations that were going on in Delhi. This was brought about by Gandhiji and not by the Maulana as he has written in his book.

Afterwards it was represented both by Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi, that my visit, instead of helping the popular cause, had injured it. This they did on the reports of those who did not like my rebuking them for raising the slogan "Quit Dogra". The Congress policy then was that the Indian princes should retain their position as constitutional rulers. Both Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi were not there; the former was in jail and the latter was outside the State. Bakshi was not allowed to go to Kashmir, or maybe, he did not want to go there. Jawaharlal believed what they said, without referring the matter to me.

Some time after, Gandhiji left Delhi for a visit to Kashmir on July 30, 1947. He reached Srinagar on the evening of August 1 and stayed there for three days when people of all shades of opinion came to see him. While at Srinagar he met the Maharaja, the Maharani and Dewan Kak. He came to Jammu on August 4 and met a deputation of workers and students. On his way back to Delhi he stopped at the Wah Refugee Camp and addressed the Hindu refugees from the Punjab. In his speech he said that

after the end of British paramountcy Kashmir would have to join either the Indian Union or Pakistan. He was of opinion that the will of the Kashmiris was the supreme law between the two dominions and the Maharaja.

Here we may as well record Gandhiji's views expressed at different times about the changing situation there and the Indian Government's reaction to it. After the accession of Kashmir to India, Gandhiji at his prayer-meeting on October 29 said that when the Maharaja in distress wished to accede to the Union (India), the Governor-General could not reject it in advance. He praised the Maharaja for appointing Sheikh Abdullah as his Prime Minister. On November 2 he said he could not escape the conclusion that the Pakistan Government was directly encouraging the raids on Kashmir. He defended the action of the Nehru Government in sending aid to stricken Kashmir. After Pakistan's act of aggression in Kashmir was referred to the UNO, Gandhiji deplored the idea propagated in some quarters of partitioning the State of Jammu and Kashmir. He said: "Were the Union and Pakistan always to depend on a third party to settle their disputes? How long would they go on quarrelling? It was more than enough that India had been divided into two. One would have thought it impossible for man to divide a country which God had made one. Yet it had happened....But that did not mean that the process of dividing should be further extended. If Kashmir was to be divided, why not other States? Where would the process end?...."He added: "If Pakistan was to become a worthy State let them and the Union representatives sit down and thrash out the Kashmir affair as they already had done in the case of many other things. If they could not do so, why could they not choose from among themselves good, true persons who could direct their steps? The first step was an open and sincere confession of past lapses."

On January 4 again, speaking on Kashmir affairs, he said: "Unhappily people were talking about the possibility of war between the two Dominions." Gandhiji "was amazed to see that the Government of Pakistan disputed the veracity of the Union's representation to the UNO and the charge that Pakistan had a hand in the invasion of Kashmir by the raiders. Mere denials cut no ice. It was incumbent upon the Indian Union to go to the

rescue of Kashmir when the latter sought its help. . . ."

Further, he said, "Both Hindus and Muslims resorted to cruel acts and made grievous blunders but that did not mean that this mad race should go on, culminating in a war. A war would bring both the Dominions under the sway of a third power and nothing could be worse."

Gandhiji, therefore, pleaded for "amity and goodwill which could enable the Union's representation to the UNO to be withdrawn with dignity". This the UNO itself would have perhaps welcomed. As a matter of fact, "Gandhiji was not enamoured of taking any Indo-Pakistan dispute to an outside organisation. It would only get them 'monkey-justice'." "After a series of denials and prevarications, Pakistan was ultimately driven to admit that its troops had participated in the invasion of Kashmir and the United Nations Commission put on record their finding that on Kashmir soil Pakistan had violated India's sovereignty." Nonetheless, Gandhiji's prediction about "monkey-justice" came true as the UNO, in spite of its findings, refused to name Pakistan as the "aggressor".

It is often asked why Gandhiji as a votary of non-violence defended the despatch of armed forces to Kashmir for its protection. Gandhiji was not advising a Government which believed in non-violence. It was keeping an army to protect its legitimate interests. These, in this case, would include the defence of Kashmir which had acceded to India in terms laid down by the British Parliament. Not to defend Kashmir would have been dereliction of duty and an act of cowardice. Though Gandhiji held that non-violence was a better way, even violence in defence of a good cause was better than submission to injustice and tyranny.

# 34

# Genesis of Partition

To continue our narrative from where we had left it to talk of events in Kashmir. The long period of negotiations marked by intrigues, communal rioting and the bringing in of the League into the Central Cabinet had created conditions in which nobody knew where the real authority lay.

This had made Congress leaders reluctantly realise that there was no possibility of peace between the Hindus and the Muslims in the foreseeable future and some kind of division of the country, they held, had become necessary. But at that time they were thinking in terms of administrative division of certain areas. However, the British bureaucracy, it would appear, was determined to satisfy Jinnah and the League about their demand for Pakistan as a separate sovereign state. This was clear from the announcement made by Attlee on February 20, wherein he said that the British would quit India by June 1948. It further said if the Constituent Assembly did not function with the representatives of all the areas, then those areas whose representatives were willing to act together would come under the Central Government and the rest would be handed over to the different Provincial Governments then in existence. As Attlee knew that the Muslim League was not joining the Constituent Assembly, this only meant that the British were preparing to withdraw after dividing India. Pakistan, therefore, appeared to be a certainty.

We have earlier mentioned that Gandhiji had sent a telegram

to the British Government to withdraw Wavell as the Viceroy, as he was unable to cope with the situation in India. Whether as a result of the telegram or on their own, the Labour Government withdrew Wavell and sent Mountbatten as Viceroy. This was a clever move. They thought it would carry weight with the Conservatives in England and reconcile them to any decisions taken by the new Viceroy. Also, Mountbatten being a scion of the Royal Family, it was perhaps thought that he would enjoy great prestige in a caste-and class-ridden colonial country. The appointment of Mountbatten as Viceroy at this juncture shows political sagacity of the British, be they even of the Labour Party. They too appreciated the value of British Royalty in imperial matters.

Tall and handsome, Mountbatten belonged to the British Navy. There he had made a name for himself. He was quick in taking decisions and as quick in putting them into effect. Jawaharlal had assured us that, even if the division of India was decided upon, it would not take less than ten years to complete the operation. The separation of Burma from India had taken as much time. But he was counting without the quick efficiency of a Mountbatten. Soon he was the boss of the whole of India. Nothing was done in those days without his advice. He could tell Gandhiji that the Congress "was with me" and not with the Mahatma. He soon became the favourite of the ladies of the smart set in Delhi. As soon as he stepped down from the position of the Viceroy, he proposed to Jawaharlal that as he was no more the representative of His Majesty the King of England, and as he was but a representative of the Indian people, he should move to a more modest residence than the Viceregal Lodge. He suggested that he could occupy the Teen Murti House, then occupied by the Commander-in-Chief and later by Jawaharlal. But the latter dismissed the proposal saying that Mountbatten need not change his residence for the short time that he would be in India. Jawaharlal could not see the psychological effect of the proposed move suggested by the foreign overlord on our future Rashtrapatis and their mode of official living. In everything that Jawaharlal did in those days, he sought the advice of Mountbatten. I knew that the question of Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir was referred to the UNO on Mountbatten's advice. And the clause about plebiscite as a condition for the accession of the State of Jammu

and Kashmir to India was adopted at his suggestion. It was he who was allowed to organise Gandhiji's funeral procession. He could do it only the way he knew, the military way. Gandhiji's body was taken on a gun carriage and he was accorded military honours, without protest from any quarter. Strangely enough, even now there is a military "reversing of arms" held on the sacred soil of Gandhiji's Samadhi on the anniversary of his death.

The Viceroy was ably helped by Lady Mountbatten. She engaged herself in creating social contacts. She organised independently refugee relief work, even though there was an organisation for this purpose created by the Congress under the chairmanship of Rajendra Babu with Sucheta as Secretary. All the Government help for the refugees was channelled through Lady Mountbatten's organisation, as the work of rehabilitation was not then undertaken directly by the administration. Lady Mountbatten was a shrewd diplomat in her own right. She became a friend of Jawaharlal. Their friendship lasted till her death. Whenever Jawaharlal went to England in after years, he passed a few days with the Mountbattens on their estate. Whenever Lady Mountbatten came to India she stayed with Jawaharlal. Both Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten had the spirit of *noblesse oblige.* Being sure of their position they mixed freely with the common crowd and even squatted with them on the ground.

Though Mountbatten in a way had been instrumental in dividing India, people were so conditioned that he was called "Pandit Mountbatten". He had also the sagacity to cultivate the friendship of Vallabhbhai. Even Jinnah had to bow to his will and accept at his hands what he had called a truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan. But Jinnah had his revenge. It was decided that Mountbatten would be the Governor-General of both parts of the country till the division was completed. Immediately after the partition, Jinnah made himself the first Governor-General of Pakistan, fulfilling a long-cherished ambition.

If we had not been credulous we would have known that Mountbatten, like his Labour masters, was only carrying out the designs and will of the white bureaucracy here. They had carefully and cleverly set the stage for the partition of the country. Mountbatten might toy with the idea of a United India, or as Gandhiji

had suggested, with the plan of handing over India to Jinnah and the League. But the men on the spot had already set the stage for the action that he took. After his coming, though the Interim Government was functioning under the Cabinet Mission Plan, he rarely, if ever, talked of it. He found the division plan as it was presented to him, more convenient. It would also commend itself to the Conservative Party in England. So far as Attlee was concerned, he had already made the announcement giving the option of separation to the provinces. The merit of Mountbatten lay in inducing the Congress leadership to accept the partition willingly. I got the confirmation of what was coming from Ismay, a member of the entourage of Mountbatten, when one day I had a talk with him. He was all for the League's plan to divide India. Mountbatten, like his predecessor and the bureaucrats, was always equating the Congress with the League in any joint conference called by him. The tragedy of the situation was that we could not get out of the knots in which we had progressively allowed ourselves to be tied up.

If partition was not conceived in terms of what the white bureaucracy here had decided upon, on the plea of protecting minority rights, one cannot understand how a modern democratic nation like England could allow the archaic idea of considering religion as the basis of citizenship and nationality. Nor can one understand how a majority in a democracy could be considered as equal to a minority. England, like other nations in the West, had ceased to conceive religion as a basis of nationality. There a democratic state is a secular state. In India democratic England allowed the establishment of Pakistan as a theocratic state, while the rest of India with a large population of Muslims remained secular as she was under the British.

The question is why Jinnah was not satisfied with all the advantage given to the Muslim League. He had not only secured parity between Hindus and Muslims but there was one more Muslim in the Interim Government nominated by the Congress.* He was also allowed to nominate a member of the Scheduled Castes when one was already

*Names of members of the reconstituted Interim Government:

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
3. Dr. Rajendra Prasad
4. Sri Asaf Ali

—*contd.*

nominated by the Congress. Earlier, the Congress had refused to accept the right of the League to nominate any but the Muslims in the quota allowed to it. The representatives in the Congress Government did not insist even upon this. Jinnah had also secured for the League the right to have a say in the matter of filling vacancies from among the other minority representatives. His nine points had been conceded by the Viceroy. Why then did he insist on the division of the country and the creation of two independent sovereign states ? It was because, as he once told a Press representative, off the record, the Home Secretary, Francis Mudie, had promised him Pakistan if he did not come to terms with the Congress and if he persisted in his demand. It was also he (Mudie) who dissuaded him from talking of transfer of population which he had done after the Bihar rioting. It must be remembered that the white civil service was the master in India whatever party might be in power in England, whoever might be the Secretary of State for India or the Viceroy. Even the Labour Government, however radical it might have been in home affairs, could not afford to ignore the pressure of the white bureaucracy, the 'men on the spot', who actually ruled.

The British Government played the League against the Congress and equated the Congress with caste Hindus. There might be important Muslim leaders holding responsible positions in the Congress, yet it must be represented as a caste Hindu organisation and not even a Hindu organisation. However transparently honest Gandhiji's love for humanity might have been, recognising no difference of creed, caste, colour, nationality or sex, the white bureaucrats always dubbed him as a caste Hindu. Whatever may be his work for the uplift of the untouchables, they must be considered as no part of Hinduism ! This game of representing the Congress and Gandhiji as Hindu was played by the bureaucracy long before the Second Round Table Conference. It was fully emphasised in that conference. It was in pursuance of this view that the Prime Minister,

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| 5. Sri C. Rajagopalachari | 6. Dr. John Matthai |
| 7. Sardar Baldev Singh | 8. Sri Jagjivan Ram |
| 9. Sri C. H. Bhabha | 10. Sri Liaquat Ali Khan |
| 11. Sri I. I. Chundrigar | 12. Sri Abdur Rab Nishtar |
| 13. Sri Ghaznafar Ali Khan | 14. Sri Joginder Nath Mandal |

MacDonald, gave what he considered an impartial award giving Harijans separate electorates. All the Viceroys followed this policy. Whatever else Mountbatten did, he too balanced the Congress against the League. Gandhiji was also treated by him in a subtle way as the representative of the Hindus, whatever he may say today. To give one example here: On June 2, 1947 Mountbatten called a conference of the leaders of the Congress and the League to meet him. On the Congress side he invited Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai; on the League side he invited Jinnah and Liaquat Ali. Some papers asked why the Congress President was not invited when the League President was invited. Jawaharlal's attention was drawn to this. He spoke to Mountbatten about it. Ultimately I was invited but not before one Abdur Rab Nishtar from the League was also invited so that there may be an equal number of representatives from the Congress and the League. As I did not want to be a party to such equation, I drafted a letter dated June 3, 1947 addressed to Mountbatten wherein I told him that in any future conference between the Congress and the League, Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai must be considered as representing the Congress and they had the full authority to act on behalf of the organisation. When I showed this draft to Gandhiji, he said I should not send it. I argued that on a previous occasion he had himself asked the Maulana that instead of going for talks with the Viceroy, he should depute Jawaharlal as representing the Congress. He said he had done that as the Maulana had to carry on a running conversation through an interpreter, and in delicate matters of negotiations if it was possible to avoid this inconvenience it should be done. The parties would then understand each other better. He added that though the Maulana knew English, he could not follow the nuances and niceties of the English language. So far as I was concerned, that was not the case. So the matter was dropped.

The members of the white civil service had ample cause to be angry with the Congress which had questioned their authority and given them enough trouble. They were the more angry because the Government at Home was negotiating with the rebels. It will be a mistake, therefore, to suppose that the Labour Prime Minister or Mountbatten was responsible for the partition. The stage had been carefully set for the tragedy by the white bureaucracy.

Gandhiji was then touring East Bengal. He realised the grave import of Attlee's announcement. In his view it was certain that the Britishers were leaving. In that case he felt that unless we were careful, "independence itself might suffer change in the process of coming and lose much of its meaning and content". It would appear that the Congress leaders did not view the partition in the same light as did Gandhiji. They thought partition was a lesser evil than mutual communal rioting and killing to which there seemed to be no end. Gandhiji, speaking to some workers, expressed his opinion that the fear of chaos had seized the Congress leadership and it was driving them to agree to partition.

A meeting of the Working Committee was called for March 6, 1947 to consider Attlee's latest announcement. A draft resolution had been prepared advocating the administrative division of the Punjab. This was because it was felt that the havoc caused there by the Muslims was much greater than that in Calcutta, Noakhali or Bihar. In the border areas of Rawalpindi there was practically no Government. I was against such an administrative division as I thought it would pave the way for the division of the country. I therefore tried to contact Gandhiji at Patna on the phone where he had by then arrived from Noakhali. But the call was received by a saintly follower of his. He refused to call Gandhiji on the phone and asked me to tell him what I wanted. What was I to tell this good man about political events going on in the capital? Reluctantly I had to put down the phone. Gandhiji employed for his schemes of constructive work some people who knew nothing but the limited work with which they were entrusted. This sometimes created difficulties.

The draft resolution was placed before the Working Committee and was passed. I expressed my dissent. The Working Committee's decision was forced by circumstances. The members felt that Pakistan which the Muslim League was insisting upon and which had the backing of the British Government was inevitable. If India was divided, the division of the Punjab and Bengal should be the necessary corollary. It was therefore as a lesser evil that they suggested the administrative division of the Punjab. Asked by the Press whether the same principle would apply to Bengal, I said, "Naturally so."

Gandhiji was disappointed and unhappy. Yet on his return to Delhi even after this decision, he tried to strike an optimistic note. When questioned by the Chinese Ambassador who had come to call on him, about the shape of things in future, Gandhiji replied: "I am an irrepressible optimist. We have not lived and toiled in vain all these years that we should become barbarians, as we now appear to be becoming, looking at all the senseless bloodshed in Bengal, in Bihar and the Punjab. But I feel that it is just an indication that as we are throwing off the foreign yoke, all the dirt and froth is coming now to the surface. When the Ganges is in flood, the water is turbid. The dirt comes to the surface. When the flood subsides, you see the clear blue water which soothes the eye. That is what I hope for and live for. I don't wish to live to see Indian humanity becoming barbarian. Who can predict the future?"* Later events, however, proved that Gandhiji was too optimistic!

On his arrival Mountbatten invited Gandhiji and Jinnah to see him. Gandhiji, therefore, returned to Delhi on March 31. He was opposed to the division of India as he believed it would harm all the parties concerned. He, therefore, proposed that the Viceroy should invite Jinnah to form the Government on behalf of the Muslim League. If he worked in the best interests of all the people of India, the Congress would give him support. The Viceroy would be the sole judge whether the Government was serving the best interests of all the people. If the League rejected this offer, the same may be made to the Congress. The Viceroy's reaction to this proposal was favourable. He said that it appealed to him. But his advisers did not want it to succeed as it would upset their plan of partitioning India. The Sardar, they knew, was against it. But they were afraid that Jawaharlal might fall in line with Gandhiji and under their combined influence the Working Committee might accept it. They knew by then the great influence that Mountbatten exercised over the judgment of Jawaharlal. They, therefore, conveyed to him that the Viceroy had not accepted the plan. When Jawaharlal met Gandhiji he told him that he saw many difficulties in the plan and would not accept it.

Now that the plan was rejected by the two leaders, it fell through in the Working Committee and there was no more talk of it.

* Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, pp. 474-75.

Gandhiji found himself alone and defeated, as he put it, but he still held firmly to his own viewpoint on this crucial issue of the partition of the country. In grief he said: "The purity of my striving will be put to the test only now. I pray that God may not keep me alive to witness it. In order that he may give me the strength and wisdom to remain firm in the midst of universal opposition and to utter the full truth, I need all the strength that purity can give." It is this wide difference in the thinking of Gandhiji and the Working Committee which made Mountbatten tell him, "The Congress is not with you but with me." As we have stated, I believe that if even at this stage Gandhiji had opposed partition, the resolution of the A.I.C.C. endorsing it might not have been passed.

In the month of April 1947, after the communal rioting in Bihar, Mountbatten was anxious that there must be an appeal to both Hindus and Muslims to keep the peace. He talked to Gandhiji. Gandhiji agreed. The following draft was prepared:

> "We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and greatest misery to the innocent people irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.
>
> "We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing any incitement to such acts."

Gandhiji was to leave for Bihar. He, therefore, signed the draft and left for Patna. But he had told the Viceroy that the signature of the Congress President must also be attached to the document or else it would appear that it was not issued by the Congress and the League. It would be interpreted as having been signed by him representing the Hindu community and Jinnah, of course, could claim that he represented the Muslim community. He did not want to be reduced to that position. Gandhiji left the matter at that. In Patna he received from Mountbatten the following telegram dated April 13:

> "Mr. Jinnah is perfectly ready to sign statement deploring the acts of violence, etc. which you signed before you left Delhi provided that your and his signatures are the only ones that

appear in the document. As you mentioned that you thought that Mr. Kripalani's signature might also be added though I gathered that you did not make this a stipulation, I am not issuing statement until I hear from you. Pandit Nehru is agreeable to leaving the matter to my discretion, but I feel I must have your views. Unless statement bears your signature alone Mr. Jinnah will not sign. May I therefore appeal to you to agree."

Before he had sent the telegram he had asked Jinnah if Kripalani's signing the peace appeal would in any way put the Muslim League at a "political disadvantage". To this Jinnah replied in the negative. Even after this answer from Jinnah, Mountbatten had sent the above telegram. To this Gandhiji's reply on the 14th was : "Am of opinion President Congress should also sign. You should know reason for exclusion, President Congress. However, I leave final decision to you and Panditji." Mountbatten prevailed upon Jawaharlal not to insist upon the Congress President's signature. Jawaharlal's reply was, though he in principle fully agreed with his (Gandhiji's) view, he left the decision to Mountbatten. On this Mountbatten sent the following wire on the 15th to Gandhiji : "I am glad to inform you that Pandit Nehru also agreed to leave the decision to me. I consider it so vital that the appeal should be issued, that I thought it best that it should go out over the signatures only of yourself and Mr. Jinnah." So the peace appeal was issued. Soon, what Gandhiji feared came to be true. The Urdu Press made it out that Gandhiji had signed the peace appeal representing the Hindus and Jinnah representing the Muslims. This is how a wise and impartial Viceroy held the balance between the Congress and the League!

At every turn it would appear that the working of the minds of the authorities and Mr. Jinnah was in perfect harmony. In this instance it was the anxiety of the Viceroy to see that peace was maintained. There is always an altruistic reason for the Britisher doing what he wants to do in the political field.

Within a month of his arrival, Mountbatten decided that if the transfer of power had to be done peacefully, the country must first be partitioned. With the concurrence of the British Cabinet he,

therefore, made an announcement* in early June that (1) India would be divided into two zones with the predominantly Hindu and the predominantly Muslim populations; and (2) there would be a referendum in the N.-W.F.P. and the Sylhet district of Assam. The Working Committee met to discuss the proposals. Gandhiji was opposed to it. His views were well known. He said he was prepared to continue with the struggle for another 10 years rather than accept the partition of the country even if it was accompanied by independence.

As stated earlier, Gandhiji had told me in Poona after the release of the members of the Working Committee that he would give one more battle to the British before he had done. He was a true revolutionary. In the pursuit of a righteous cause he did not mind what hardships the people suffered and how many of them lost their lives and what property was destroyed, provided those fighting for the cause remained non-violent and did not retaliate. In 1942 at the time of the Quit India resolution, he had asked the British to "leave the country to God or chaos". He did not mind even chaos as long as he remained firm in his faith, which was bound up with non-violence. If Gandhiji had believed in violence he would not have minded if millions died provided he considered the cause he was advocating was right. He would have then become one of the great scourges of mankind whom we read of in history. We, members of the Working Committee, were not fashioned in that heroic mould. We were frightened at the prospect of chaos. The longer the British remained in India—and we felt that they would remain as long as the Muslim League was not satisfied with the arrangements they made—what had happened in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and the Punjab would happen again and again. We must not forget that the British had always said that they could not leave the minority, to whom they had repeatedly given promise of protection, at the mercy of the majority. Cripps said in 1942 that an Indian State or a Province could keep out of the future Union in which case a separate constitution would be prepared for such a unit. It would be given a status comparable to that of the Indian Union.

Attlee in his statement made on February 20 merely put the same idea in his own words. "If the Constituent Assembly did not

*See Appendix XV.

function with the representatives of all the areas, then those areas whose representatives are willing to act together will come under the Central Government and the rest would be handed over to the provincial governments." Even if the British left without meeting the League demand for Pakistan, it would not have been possible to ignore the Muslim community, which was at that time overwhelmingly League-minded. The nationalist Muslims at that time had very little influence over their co-religionists. We had established in 1935 Congress Governments in almost all the provinces. Their authority was strictly limited. And yet there was an outcry of the Muslims against them and a document like the "Pirpur Report" was issued. The coalition Government with the League as the partner had been tried. It had miserably failed. The League was completely in the hands of Jinnah whose advisers were the British bureaucracy.

Jinnah lacked historical perspective. He had no idea or appreciation of the common culture that had developed in India during the course of centuries of Muslim rule. He was willing to make the Muslims leave their most sacred places like Ajmer Sharif, Bihar Sharif, Nizam-ud-din, etc., associated with the greatest Muslim saints who had lived and worked in India. He also did not care if the fine monuments of Muslim architecture like the Taj, the Jama Masjid, the mausoleums of Humayun and other Muslim kings were left behind in India. He was willing to abandon the joint culture that the two communities had developed in literature, poetry, language, architecture, music and dance. These were matters of hardly any significance to him. With such a man one could not come to a settlement whatever concessions might be made. The Working Committee had given all possible advantages to the Muslim League, ignoring their own principles, repudiating their leader and even reducing the majority into a minority and yet he could not be satisfied. Gandhiji was strenuously working for Hindu-Muslim unity. This would be clear from the letter he wrote from Noakhali to a friend on November 26. In brief it said : "You know that I am living alone at Srirampur. Prof. Nirmal Kumar and Parasuram are with me.... There are hundreds of villages which have no connecting roads. When streams dry up...one has to walk here on foot. I shall live here so long as Hindus and Muslims do not live in friendship. Only by the grace of God one can keep here one's peace of mind. Today

I have left Delhi, Sevagram, Uruly, Panchagani. I shall do or die. Here is the test of my non-violence....I shall not go into the Constituent Assembly, indeed there is little necessity for it. If there is need to meet me, Jawaharlal, Sardar, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji, Maulana, all or any one of them may come, either all five or Kripalani." He did not at this time concern himself with what was happening on the political front in Delhi. He was repeatedly putting his precious life in danger to restore communal amity. Whenever and wherever he undertook a fast, peace was restored but trouble would recur somewhere else. His fast had only an immediate and temporary effect. There was no true change of heart. In Calcutta, he tried to give it some organisational form in the shape of the "Shanti Sena". There it could give the largest protection to the Muslims, for the Hindus were in a great majority and they no more relied upon the authorities. I was present in Calcutta when this organisation was formed immediately after partition. The "Shanti Sena" had organised a march to some parts of the city. Yet, in that procession two promising Hindu youths, one recently married, were stabbed to death by Muslim fanatics. It was quite possible that the "Shanti Sena" might have ultimately come to be so organised as to be able to keep peace between the Hindus and the Muslims. But how long would it have taken? Partition by then would have become a settled fact. And in consequence irreversible actions would have been taken both in the national and international fields. I write this not in justification of the decision taken by the Working Committee but to point out that our affairs had been so manipulated by the foreign rulers that there appeared to be no way out of the mess that had been created, without injuring the country. We also by slow degrees had drifted into the net spread for us.

The Working Committee met on June 4 in Delhi at Bhangi Colony where Gandhiji was staying. Three days before on the morning of June 1, Gandhiji woke up earlier than the morning prayer time and, as recorded by Pyarelal, he lay in bed and was heard musing audibly:"....Today I find myself alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon....They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be a partition, it should not be through British intervention or

under the British rule....They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be.... I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark." After a while he continued : "But maybe, all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. *Let it not be said that Gandhiji was party to India's vivisection.* But everybody is today impatient for India's independence. Therefore, there is no other help."*

The Working Committee met in a tense atmosphere. Everybody felt depressed at the prospect of the partition of the country. The Viceroy's proposals were accepted without much discussion. As a matter of fact Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai were already committed to the acceptance of the proposals. There was no critical examination. For instance, in Sind where there was a League Ministry, the decision of accession to Pakistan was left to the Assembly. In the North-West Frontier province, where there was a Congress Ministry in office, this decision was not left to the Assembly, but there was to be a referendum of the people to ascertain anew their preference. Again, while the Sylhet district of Assam having a Muslim majority was carved out of the province for ascertaining the will of the people, the same choice was denied to the district of Tharparkar in Sind on the borders of Rajasthan where there was a Hindu majority. It was quite natural for our foreign masters to ignore all their inconsistencies in order to favour the League; one cannot understand why we of the Working Committee did not even draw their attention to these important details.

Gandhiji's views were well known. They have been given in the previous paragraphs. He did not want the partition of India in any shape or form. The only member of the Working Committee who voted against the decision was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Ghaffar Khan was strongly opposed to partition and felt that such

* *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, **Vol. II, p. 211.**

a division would let down the Pathans and cause their ruin. Almost in tears he said, "Ham to tabah ho gaye" ("We are utterly ruined"). I have no doubt that this was a great betrayal of our Frontier comrades in the freedom fight though I was a party to it. Maulana Azad and other Muslim leaders were also a party to the decision. I feel if along with Ghaffar Khan they had stood up against the partition, it might not have taken place. But they were always obsessed with the idea of self-determination for the Muslims.

After the Congress Working Committee had accepted the partition proposals, the Viceroy next day invited Gandhiji to meet him. Gandhiji saw him. He was apprehensive that Gandhiji might blame him for the decision that had been taken. The details of the talk are not known. It was Gandhiji's silence day. In one of the chits passed on to the Viceroy, Gandhiji had written: "Have I said anything against you?" Obviously this must have been in reply to a question from the Viceroy asking Gandhiji whether he had any fault to find with him for what had been done. How could Gandhiji blame the Viceroy for what had been decided upon ? When others went wrong and indulged in violence, he often said that his non-violence could not be ideal or why otherwise would the people be violent? If anybody in his Ashram did anything wrong, he blamed himself and undertook, as he called it, a purificatory fast. In this case he could not blame the Viceroy or the British Government, as partition had been accepted by Congress leaders, maybe as a lesser evil than chaos.

Even though the British had partitioned India into two sovereign States, yet they were anxious that both should remain in the Commonwealth. About Pakistan they were certain. About India they were apprehensive that it might choose to go outside the Commonwealth. About this Pyarelal has recorded : "India's future relations with Britain were still an issue....The last time Gandhiji touched upon the subject was a few days before the end when a formula was being examined by which the Indian Union would become a Republic and yet remain in the Commonwealth. An unofficial emissary from Lord Mountbatten came to sound Gandhiji. After he had left, Gandhiji remarked that he for one would never be reconciled to it so long as racial discrimination against Indian nationals was not banished from the Commonwealth countries. But in that he

was afraid...he would perhaps find himself in a minority of one."*† At the A.I.C.C. meeting held on June 14 and 15,1947 there was strong opposition to the resolution headed by Purushottam Das Tandon but Gandhiji himself advised the members to accept the decision of the Working Committee though he personally thought no good would come out of it. He asked them to trust their leaders. The resolution might not have been passed but for Gandhiji's advice.

It has often been asked why Gandhiji, opposed as he was to partition calling it the vivisection of India, asked the A.I.C.C. to accept the decision of the Working Committee. It may be that he instinctively felt that the sands of time were running out and he could not leave the country without a leadership. It is well known that more than once he had said that it appeared to him that he could bring about Hindu-Muslim unity only by giving his life. But he could not commit suicide. Somebody must kill him. And that is what unfortunately happened. If he had opposed the decision of the Working Committee, he would have had to go to the country and ask it to repudiate its leaders who were instrumental in taking this decision. He could not have done this without creating a new leadership.

This, I believe, could have been done but it could not have been done immediately. It would have taken time and partition by then would have become a settled fact. In this connection, what Gandhiji said while asking the members of the A.I.C.C. to accept the partition decision taken by the Working Committee is significant. He said, "Wouldn't I do it (oppose it), if only I had the time? But I cannot challenge the present Congress leadership and demolish the people's faith in it unless I am in a position to tell them 'Here is an alternative leadership.' I have not the time left to build up such an alternative. It would be wrong under the circumstances to weaken the present leadership. I must therefore swallow the bitter pill."

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**Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, pp. 294-95.

†Even when Gandhiji had nothing to do with the decision about partition, Mountbatten thought that his views might count. Though Pyarelal has not given the name of the Indian emissary, we are constrained to mention his name for historical reasons. He was no other than Krishna Menon. Pyarelal has omitted to record the remark made by Gandhiji at the end. He had said, "Though the tongue was his (Menon's), the voice was that of Mountbatten."

At the end of his speech he said that he would have opposed partition but it would have meant rebellion. In his own words, he added: "I have not that strength today or else I would have declared rebellion single-handed."

In his book *India Wins Freedom* (pp. 192-97), Maulana Azad has said that he was against partition and that he had made his opinion clear to Gandhiji. I do not know what private conference he had with Gandhiji. All I know is that he never opposed it in the Working Committee or the A.I.C.C.

# 35

# The Healing Touch

Now that the partition was imposed by the British Government and accepted both by the League and by the Congress, Gandhiji turned his thoughts to the major problem the country would have to face. He, therefore, decided to devote all his energy to minimise the evil effects of the decision, that is, to bring about communal harmony. He again turned his steps towards Noakhali. He left Delhi on August 7, 1947. The first halt was at Calcutta from where he was to proceed to Noakhali. He found the situation in Calcutta had deteriorated at the news of the happenings in the Punjab. The Muslim leaders pressed Gandhiji to stay there for a few days. He acceded to their request. In order to bring about greater harmony and trust, he decided to stay in a house deserted by a Muslim in Baliaghata, a predominantly Muslim area. Suhrawardy, who was no more the Chief Minister, came to stay with him. He realised that under the circumstances created by the partition, if the Muslims were to be saved from the wrath of the majority community in Calcutta, Gandhiji was the only hope. I was there at that time. I asked Gandhiji how he could trust Suhrawardy who was responsible for all that had happened in Calcutta and Noakhali and Bihar. Gandhiji did not reply. But as soon as Suhrawardy came to the room, he told him: "Kripalani does not believe that you will work for Hindu-Muslim unity. However, I trust you." I was put in a rather awkward position but I thought that a man like Suhrawardy would not mind what I had said. It was Gandhiji's habit to tell people what

others thought of them even though it might cause some embarrassment.

In Bengal both the officials and the public worked incessantly to create goodwill between the two communities at that time. Prafulla Ghosh who was the Chief Minister-designate of West Bengal and Rajaji who had become the Governor gave active support to this work. As a result, within a few days the atmosphere improved. Gandhiji said that it had happened by "God's grace".

Independence Day was celebrated by him with fasting, prayer and the recital of the *Gita*. It also happened to be Mahadevbhai's death anniversary. I stayed with him there. Thousands of people had lost their all including their relatives and friends and no adequate arrangements could be made for the rehabilitation of those who had survived.*

The atmosphere of amity in Calcutta was, however, very short-lived. As reports of fresh happenings poured in from the Punjab, rioting again broke out. A transfer of population which Gandhiji and other leaders wanted to avoid took place automatically in the case of the Punjab and the Frontier and Sind on account of these fresh riots. This unfortunately we had not anticipated. Hindu refugees from these places poured into India. They were killed, robbed and looted in transit. Muslims from India going to Pakistan were subjected to similar barbarities. The Central Government had to mobilise its civil and military forces to cope with the unprecedented situation.

Gandhiji was anxious to proceed to the Punjab immediately but he was advised by Jawaharlal and the Sardar to wait because

*I had on August 14, 1947 issued a statement in Calcutta in which I had said that "it was a day of sorrow and destruction for India". In his book *India Wins Freedom* (p. 207), Maulana Azad has described me as "a man of Sind". The implication is that my sorrow was due to the fact that the province of Sind was given over to Pakistan. The Maulana ought to have known that I had left Sind 30 years ago except for an occasional visit when invited for public work. I was speaking for the whole of India for which we had all worked. If I had thought in terms of Sind, I could have strenuously opposed the partition scheme. But the Maulana's account of the events at that time is a curious mixture of facts and fancies. His memory too seems to have been failing. It is not a question of correcting a passage here and there. It would require a volume, as big as he had written, to correct all his mis-statements and misconceptions.

they did not want Gandhiji to face the frenzied mob which was coming into India. They thought they would tackle the problem first at the administrative level and then call Gandhiji. He, therefore, continued in Calcutta where the communal situation needed his attention. He applied the last remedy of a satyagrahi: he decided on a fast, which was started on September 1. It had a very salutary effect. Within a few days people poured into the house where he was staying, requesting him to give up his fast, expressing their regret for the happenings. Important members of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities gave him assurances that peace would be maintained. Some of those responsible for creating the trouble came to surrender their weapons to Gandhiji. On September 4, he broke his fast. The fact is that sometimes his very presence brought about communal harmony. If that did not work, his fast always did. It brought sanity to the leaders of the different communities and peace was restored, though only for the time being.

Soon after the partition, the atmosphere in Delhi had grown more tense as refugees in thousands poured in from West Punjab. They brought with them gruesome tales of their sufferings in Pakistan —whole villages devastated, women dishonoured, carried away, distributed as "booty", sometimes openly sold. Infants-in-arms and children were speared to death in cold blood. Wives came without their husbands, husbands without their wives and children without their parents. There were innumerable conversions. Arson and loot were rampant. Attacks were made on refugee convoys and refugee trains on the route. Many were killed and many more reached Delhi having been wounded on the way. The Muslims who fled in panic to Pakistan on account of rioting in some parts of Northern India fared no better. As the biggest migration of population recorded in history was in progress, a most dangerous situation arose in the capital. Every fourth person in Delhi was a Hindu or Sikh refugee from Pakistan. They were furious not only against the Muslims who were at the root of the partition but also against the Congress for agreeing to it.

To make matters worse, there were rumours of a *coup d'etat* on the part of the Muslims to seize the administration of the capital. The fact that the Muslims had collected arms gave credence to the

rumours. Searches of Muslim houses by the police had revealed dumps of bombs, arms and ammunition. Sten-guns, Bren guns, mortars and wireless transmitters were seized and secret miniature factories for the manufacture of the same were uncovered. At a number of places these weapons were actually used by the Muslims in pitched battles. The Sikh and Hindu refugees and many of the non-Muslim residents had no faith in the ability of the Government to afford them protection from any attack from the Muslims. Some even doubted whether the Government would take action against the Muslims. Hindu and Sikh communal organisations fanned the flames. Riots broke out in Delhi on September 4, 1947. The Government immediately went into action.

The task of the Government in quelling the riots was made difficult as the bulk of the police force was Muslim. A number of them in their uniforms and with arms had deserted. The loyalty of the rest was doubtful. The Government had to bring police and military forces from other provinces. The Sardar had to wire for a reliable Gurkha force from West Bengal. The Chief Minister of the Central Provinces sent a contingent of police in response to an urgent message from the Union Government. The authorities also sent for troops from the South who would be free from the Hindu communal bias. An order was also passed by the Home Department to the irritation of many Sikhs that none should carry *kirpans* more than 9 inches long. The efforts of the authorities were backed by Congressmen. They went into the mohallas where the Muslims had the worst of it and escorted them even at dead of night to the safety of the camps in the Purana Qilla.

Gandhiji arrived in Delhi on the morning of September 9. He was received at the station by the Sardar and taken to Birla House, as the Bhangi Colony where he usually stayed was over-crowded with refugees from Pakistan. The Sardar reported to Gandhiji on the situation prevailing in the capital. Nehru, reporting about the events, said, "The wretches have created chaos in the whole city. It is a disgrace. Ration shops have been looted. Fruits, vegetables and provisions are difficult to obtain. What must be the plight of the ordinary citizen?"

A conference with the leaders followed. All eyes were turned on Gandhiji who had just come after performing a "miracle" in

Calcutta where, as we have seen, he was able to extinguish the communal fire in a few days. On hearing the reports he said, "I don't know what I shall be able to do here. But one thing is clear. I cannot leave this place until Delhi is peaceful again." He consoled the Muslims who came to see him to narrate their tales of woe.

In the course of a statement to the Press, Gandhiji said, "I have been listening the whole day long to the tale of woe that is Delhi today....I must do my little bit to calm the heated atmosphere. I must apply the old formula 'do or die' to the capital of India. I am glad to be able to say that the residents of Delhi do not want the senseless destruction that is going on. I, therefore, ask all those who are engaged in committing senseless murders, arson and loot to stay their hands."

From the next day, i.e., September 10, Gandhiji set out to make a tour of the riot-affected parts of the city and the various Muslim and Hindu refugee camps. Angry faces surrounded him everywhere. In one camp to which Sucheta, Secretary of the Congress Relief Committee, took him, a torrent of abuse was poured on him as soon as he arrived. This went on for about 20 minutes. He bore it all with bowed head. He then raised his head and said with a sad smile, "They had a right to be angry. They were the real sufferers. I am glad they have unburdened themselves. It was good." After visiting some Muslim camps, he remarked, "India has to expiate for the massacre of the innocents."*

On September 14 in a written message Gandhiji stated, "I would urge the Muslims of Delhi to shed all fear, trust in God and discover all the arms in their possession which the Hindus and Sikhs fear they have. Either the minority rely upon God and His creature man to do the right thing or rely upon their firearms to defend themselves against those whom they feel they must not trust."

Gandhiji tried to impress upon the local Muslims that the possession of unlicensed arms was bound to do the possessors more harm than good. Their salvation lay in surrendering them....However,

*Maulana Azad, in his book *India Wins Freedom* (p. 216), says, "Patel had not only failed to give protection to Muslims, but he lightheartedly dismissed any complaint made on this account." Had this been the case, the situation would have become much worse, and peace would not have returned to the capital so soon.

not many arms were surrendered to Gandhiji. "The haul," as he said, "never came to much for Delhi." Many more were seized by the police. For the few who had arms, many had to pay dearly.

In one of his prayer-meetings, Gandhiji appealed to the people to forget the past and not to brood over their sufferings but extend the right hand of fellowship to one another and determine to live in peace. The Muslims, he added, should be proud to live in the Indian Union and show due respect to the tricolour. He assured them that when the surrender of arms was voluntary, the Government would take no action.

Soon after the arrival of Gandhiji in the capital, the fury of the outbreak had been brought under control. Delhi appeared to be quiet. However, Gandhiji was not satisfied. He said in his prayer-meeting that it brought him little solace as peace was due to the presence of the police and the military. The people's hearts were still estranged.

The stupendous task of receiving thousands of refugees who were pouring into Delhi from day to day and making arrangements for their food and shelter could not be adequately handled by the much-harassed Government, preoccupied as they were with the problem of bringing the evacuees from Pakistan. The main burden of looking after the refugees therefore fell on volunatry organisations. The Congress started the Central Relief Committee with Rajendra Babu as Chairman and Sucheta as Secretary. This organisation along with other relief organisations was managing the work as best it could, with whatever help it could get from the Government. The Government help was in the shape of foodgrains as they were rationed. Two sets of camps had to be opened in Delhi—one for the Hindus and the other for the Muslims. The refugee camps were overflowing. Many refugees were not satisfied with the arrangements and they carried their complaints to Gandhiji. It pains me to recall that on one occasion when some Bahawalpur refugees wanted accommodation arrangements to be made for them, Gandhiji wished to discuss the matter with the authorities. He, therefore, asked Pyarelal to phone the Sardar's Secretary to meet him. His reply was that he was too busy to see Gandhiji. Gandhiji's relations with the Government had become so strained that a Secretary could tell him that he had no time to meet him. The Secretaries take their cue from their superiors !

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# Agony and Travail

GANDHIJI at this time was a very unhappy man. He was deeply concerned over the continuing communal bitterness and the attitude of hostility between Pakistan and India. There were also growing differences between Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel. The Sardar and Maulana Azad were also not pulling on well with each other. To add to these difficulties, the country was suffering from a food crisis. The controls which had continued after the end of the war were not working satisfactorily. Further, there were during this time reports of rivalry for positions of power amongst Congressmen and corruption in the administration. Gandhiji's words carried little weight with the leaders. Partition had not brought peace to the country.

There was constant tension between the administrative and organisational wings of the Congress. My position as Congress President was embarrassing. The leaders in the Government took important decisions without consulting me or the Working Committee of which they were important members and wherein their opinions would have prevailed. I have already mentioned that before allowing the League to join the Interim Government at the instance of the Viceroy, the matter was not discussed in the Working Committee or with me as President. In one meeting of the Working Committee Jawaharlal said, "The historical role of the Congress is finished with independence." My reply was : "Then your Government will hang in mid-air." I was not called to the

conference where the draft of the Independence Bill, to be passed by the British Parliament, was discussed. I did not like to lower the status which had been occupied before me by the most distinguished patriots of the country and about which Gandhiji had once said: "Despised we may be; slaves we may be; the world may, if it chooses, think nothing of the national Assembly, but for us a President of our Assembly must be all in all." I have given a few instances of the scant courtesy shown to the Congress President. I may not multiply here other such instances. I am not writing my reminiscences. I must therefore confine myself to the part Gandhiji played in my resignation.

Six months before I actually resigned, I had written out a letter of resignation along with the Secretaries and showed it to Gandhiji. He said my complaints were genuine and that he would speak to Jawaharlal and the Sardar. When six months later I again broached the subject to him, he said that I was right and had no choice left but to resign. I had therefore to efface myself. Even today it will be interesting to read the speech I made before the A.I.C.C. while laying down the reins of the highest office which was in the gift of the nation to bestow on one of its humble servants whose services were appreciated. Every word of that speech had the approval of Gandhiji. Wherever he suggested corrections, they were incorporated. In the Working Committee when I informed the members that I had made up my mind to resign, Gandhiji suggested that Narendra Deva of the Socialist group in the Congress should succeed me. Jawaharlal approved of the idea but the Sardar objected on the ground that it would not be a representative choice. Nothing was decided.

Jawaharlal and the Sardar then approached Rajendra Babu to resign his Food portfolio in the Interim Government and take up the work of the Congress. Rajendra Babu did not approve of the idea. He went to consult Gandhiji. He was against his leaving the portfolio of Food and Agriculture. Rajendra Babu himself told me that he did not like the change, because he was just then getting a "grip over the food situation". However, Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai ultimately prevailed upon him to become the Congress President. In the final decision that Rajendra Babu took, he had not consulted Gandhiji. Gandhiji expressed

surprise when he learnt that Rajendra Babu had given his consent to the change.

These days Gandhiji's anguish of heart found expression in his public utterances, mostly at his prayer-meetings. As already mentioned he no more wanted to live, rather he talked of his death. This was due not only to the partition but the way the Government and the Congress organisation were functioning. Neither in the Government nor in the organisation was there unity. He had sometimes to settle the differences between Jawaharlal and the Sardar. This he had to do even when they had lost faith in his leadership. One day he told me, "Jawaharlal at least tries to understand me, though he may not follow my advice, but Vallabhbhai thinks that I have become old and lost grip over reality."

Seeing the condition of the organisation, Gandhiji suggested that the Congress which represented all sections of the people should be converted into a Lok Sevak Sangh. This, he thought, would check the rot in the Congress and cleanse the political atmosphere in the country. For political purposes he wanted the leaders holding different views to organise their own political parties. A few days before his death, he talked to us about his concept of the Lok Sevak Sangh. The day he was assassinated he handed over a draft of its constitution to Pyarelal.

The communal situation in Delhi remained tense in spite of the efforts of many social and political workers. Gandhiji got no rest. In fact, some friends made it a point to go and unburden themselves to him even about trivial incidents in connection with the difficulties of the minorities. Gandhiji's soul was in travail. He who could sleep like a child and during night journeys sleep in between stations, where he received tumultuous ovations, now had disturbed sleep. He was also conscious that he was not acting like a true *karmayogi* or *sthitaprajna* of the *Gita*, unaffected by the pairs of opposites, pleasure and pain, good and evil, success and failure. About this he says: "If one has completely merged oneself with Him, one should be content to leave good and bad, success and failure to Him and be careful for nothing. I feel I have not attained that state and, therefore, my striving is incomplete."

There were some stray cases of violence against the Muslims. They should have been brought to the notice of the Government,

which was dealing with the situation and had brought it under reasonable control. Instead, these reports were carried in an exaggerated form to Gandhiji who was in poor health at the time and under very great mental strain. This led him to go on a fast.*

At least in Delhi, Gandhiji said the Muslims should feel safe. What was happening in Delhi was in retaliation for what had happened and was happening in Pakistan. He did not want this kind of retaliation. Sometimes in his prayer-meetings he had said that if the Hindus suffered in Pakistan, that was no reason to heap

*Maulana Azad, in his book *India Wins Freedom* (p. 216), writes that the fast was against Sardar Patel. About this Pyarelal quotes Gandhiji in answer to Muslim critics of the Sardar, "I wonder if with a knowledge of this background to my statement, anybody would dare call my fast as condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. If there is any such person, I can only tell him that he would degrade and hurt himself." (*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 717).

As a matter of fact, the fast was undertaken to give satisfaction to the Muslims. Maulana Habibur Rehman and some other Muslim leaders had made it a habit of visiting Gandhiji every day in the morning, carrying to him reports of even petty happenings to show that in spite of the efforts of the Government and the Congressmen, the communal situation was not under control. One day Habibur Rehman told Gandhiji that he should arrange for his migration to England as he was unable to stay in India and was not prepared to go to Pakistan. This touched Gandhiji to the quick. It was after this that Gandhiji decided to go on a fast. Again, after the commencement of the fast, "when the Delhi Maulanas came to see him in the course of the day, Gandhiji greeted them with, 'Are you now satisfied?' Then, turning to the one who had said to him three days before that he should get the Union Government to send them to England, he remarked: 'I had no answer to give you then. I can now face you. Shall I ask the Government to arrange a passage for you to England? I shall say to them: Here are the unfaithful Muslims who want to desert India. Give them the facility they want.'

"The Maulana said he felt sorry if his words had hurt him. Gandhiji retorted with urbane banter: 'That would be like the Englishman who kicks you and at the same time goes on saying: I beg your pardon!' Becoming serious, he proceeded: 'Do you not feel ashamed of asking to be sent to England? And then you said that slavery under British rule was better than independence under the Union of India. How dare you, who claim to be patriots and nationalists, utter such words? You have to cleanse your hearts and learn to be cent per cent truthful. Otherwise India will not tolerate you for long and even I shall not be able to help you.' " (Pyarelal: *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 709)

sufferings on innocent Muslims in India. If Hindu property was looted in Pakistan, the same must not happen to Muslim property at the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. If Hindu houses were occupied by Muslims in Pakistan, Muslim houses must not be occupied by Hindus even if they were deserted by Muslims who had fled to Pakistan. If Hindu places of worship were desecrated in Pakistan, the same must not happen to Muslim places of worship in India. If any mosque was destroyed, it must be rebuilt by the Hindus and Sikhs. It was usual for Gandhiji to insist upon a better standard of conduct from those whom he considered his own than from those who considered themselves his opponents or enemies.

Gandhiji started his fast on January 13, 1948. On the 18th he was able to give up the fast on an assurance given to him by the representatives of the Hindu and Sikh communities that they would see that no disturbance took place in Delhi and the conditions he had laid down were fulfilled. The Muslim leaders also promised that they would see that their community did nothing to aggravate the situation.

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# Journey's End

DURING the fast the Cabinet met by his bedside and on his advice took the decision to transfer to Pakistan 55 crores of rupees as Pakistan's share of the Indian assets which had been promised even though a greater amount was to be paid by Pakistan at a later stage. This decision and the higher standards of conduct that he had prescribed for Hindus and Sikhs were greatly resented by communalist Hindus. One section of them had been fanning hatred against Gandhiji for many months past. On January 20, Madan Lal, a refugee who was the instrument of a group of conspirators from Maharashtra and Gwalior, threw a bomb at Gandhiji's prayer-meeting. Fortunately, Gandhiji was unhurt but a part of the boundary wall of Birla House was damaged. Madan Lal was arrested, but Gandhiji desired that he should not be ill-treated in any way. The Government of Bombay as well as the Central Government had received information that a conspiracy was afoot to kill Gandhiji. Apparently they did not attach to it as much importance as they should have, particularly after the incident of Madan Lal.

On January 30, while walking to the prayer-ground, Gandhiji was shot by Godse. He fell down with the words 'He Ram' on his lips.

The voice that had guided and warned us for more than thirty years was thus silenced. The light that had led us on to our goal was extinguished. But can an assassin's bullet or dagger silence

the voice or extinguish the light of the chosen of the gods who have a mission to perform? They never die. They live as long as their message has meaning and relevance for humanity. It would be hard to deny that Gandhiji's message of peace and goodwill is needed by humanity in this nuclear age more than ever before. His message may not be heard in the land of his birth. But was his message only for his people? It was for the whole of humanity. Those who had ears to hear heard its echo in America with the martyrdom of Martin Luther King, Jr., a true follower of Gandhiji. Wherever people yearn for life and light, Gandhiji's voice will prevail.

The most cruel part of this tragedy is not only the death of Gandhiji. It is that he fell by the blow struck by one who considered himself a Hindu, against one who had ordered his life in the spirit of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. The assassin has betrayed the whole history of Hinduism, which never raised its hand against a spiritual teacher for the views he held, however heterodox they were considered by a section of his people. The Hindus have not only tolerated but even welcomed differences in belief, honestly held and propagated. It was for such misguided people, who injure their religion while seeking to protect it through violence and murder, that it was said : "God, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

PART II

# His Thought

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# Introduction: An Integral Approach to Gandhian Thought

GANDHIJI believed in the unity of human life, which is a synthetic whole. It cannot be divided into separate, watertight compartments—religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual and collective. All the seemingly separate segments are but different facets of man's life. They act and react upon one another. In reality, there can be no problems that are purely moral, economic, political, social, individual or collective. They are inextricably intertwined.

Division of human life into different compartments is often undertaken to facilitate analysis and study. The artificial individual thus created has, however, no existence in real life. Any knowledge derived from the study of such an individual will be partial and lopsided. It will not be true to the integrated facts of life. If relied and acted upon, it will create in the individual a split personality and in the social group a state of imbalance. Analysis and study are not the ends of human life. Life, individual and collective, is meant to be lived. Study and resultant knowledge are useful only in so far as they help man to act correctly and live well and worthily. Every seer, prophet or reformer, seeks to find an integrated way of life.

If life cannot be artificially divided in actual practice and if it is to be lived well and worthily, it must be regulated in accordance with a plan or an integrated scheme. It must be guided by certain

basic principles and values. Bereft of them it would lack direction and purpose. Human conduct is largely social conduct. If it lacks direction and purpose, no expectations for the future can be built on it. Under such circumstances there is bound to be uncertainty. If then life is a unity, the principles and values guiding it must also be properly unified and integrated. They must also form a coherent system.

Gandhiji's own life was lived in conformity with certain basic principles and was, therefore, integrated and co-ordinated. It made a harmonious whole. His teachings and schemes of reform also reflect the same integration and co-ordination. There is a basic unity of purpose and aim. This unity, however, is not always apparent to a superficial student of his life and his speeches and writings. The elements of the unity are there, but they have not been reduced to a system. Gandhiji himself never attempted a systematisation of his thought. Like many of the old reformers and prophets he was content to act in a given situation and solve life's problems, as they arose or presented themselves to him, in the light of his basic moral principles. Like them he left the task of logical ordering and systematisation to others. The solutions he offered to the problems that confronted him, the country and even the world, were practical and often coloured by the times and circumstances in which they arose. It is, therefore, no wonder that Gandhiji created no new system of philosophy, creed or religion.

This want of a logical system or creed has both advantages and disadvantages. Systems and creeds have a tendency to become rigid, fixed and formal. They lead to blind orthodoxies and fanaticism. They inhibit the spirit of free inquiry, investigation and experiment. They make change and growth difficult, if not impossible. In course of time, rigid creeds and systems lose their vitality and the creative impulse. No creed or system, however liberal and all-embracing, can entirely escape the influence of time and place and existing circumstances. Life refuses to work for any length of time within the narrow limits of a set of fixed and rigid ideas, ideologies or conventions. They block the way to new knowledge and experience and devitalise those who put their exclusive faith in them. They imply that all experience and knowledge was exhausted at a particular moment of time and at a

particular place by a particular individual or individuals and nothing was left to the initiative and inventive urge of future generations.

On the other hand, want of a system has its own disadvantages. It lacks integrated and systematic unity of thought and action based upon it. There is lack of co-ordination. The result is that often conflicting ideas and conduct can be justified by referring them to unorganised thought, expression and action.

Between these two extremes of a rigid system, uniformity and law, and no system, where every situation is unique and must be judged on its own merits, there is a middle path. Here the basic principles and values are enunciated, but their application is left to the honest judgment of individuals and groups, who would regulate action, keeping in view the existing circumstances. Gandhiji's teachings represent such a path. In studying them, their basic principles have to be clearly stated, their definite implications brought out and their scope defined. This, of course, would need detailed, careful and critical study, not only of his works but also of his life. Such a study, faithfully carried out, would obviate hasty, uninformed and partisan attitudes. It will also check over-enthusiastic exuberance. This task, however, presents certain difficulties, arising out of his personality, its evolution, and his ideas as he worked them out in practice. Therefore, before any attempt is made at a systematic exposition it is necessary to take note of these difficulties.

Gandhiji was not an intellectual in the academic sense of the term. He was not a scholar or a philosopher. He was not a theoretician. His thinking had the quality of a creative genius and not that of a student. He was pre-eminently a man of action. He has written a great deal but his writings are designed as a guide to action and not for the acquisition of knowledge. They are generally concerned with the solution of his actual problems, arising out of the many-sided and complex situations of his time. The discussion of theory is always brief and sketchy. As soon as Gandhiji had an idea or a plan, he tried to put it into practice and induced others to do likewise. In the latter case, he had naturally to explain his ideas and plans. But the explanations were brief and suited to the person, place and occasion. The guidance given was practical. Generally the instruction and the explanations were conveyed through correspondence, newspaper articles or brought out in

committee discussions and speeches. Gandhiji has written a few books. But even these are concerned with particular problems. They are not written with the object of explaining his system of thought rationally and logically argued in all its implications. The writings are generally free from references to other thinkers and authors. For popularising his ideas and converting the people to his way of thinking and action, Gandhiji, as a practical reformer, relied more on example than on precept or preaching. The result is that from the point of view of theory there are not only gaps that need filling but also apparent contradictions that need to be reconciled in the light of his thought as a whole.

Whatever their external form of presentation and expression, Gandhiji's ideas are new and revolutionary. They arise out of the creative mind of an individual to whose reforming zeal the social situation and the difficulties of those times are a challenge. For him historical precedents and examples are no barrier to fresh thinking and discovery. Gandhiji did not acquire his ideas and knowledge merely from books. He did not pass his time in libraries and museums poring over musty volumes. Much of his knowledge was the result of direct contact with life and the practical experience it offered. He, therefore, placed his ideas before the public not in the language of the learned but in that of the average intelligent man and woman. In explaining them he did not use the philosophic and technical language of the Schools. He was a man of the masses and spoke to them in their own simple language, which they understood. He addressed them not about what he had read and studied in books but what he had seen, sensed, experienced and thought about. He described his own observations and his reactions to them. This is the method that has characterised great religious reformers and prophets. Also, his method is more suited to the intellectual capacity of the common man than that of the learned. It readily appeals to the former and carries conviction. Often, however, it leaves the intellectual and academic mind unconvinced and cold. Also Gandhiji was no great student of history. Like the prophets of old he created history. His practical schemes of work and his explanations, therefore, created his philosophy.

The present age is not one for prophets and seers. It does not believe in revealed or intuitive knowledge. It distrusts inspiration,

though some of the greatest truths in religion, philosophy, science and the arts are the results of the intuition of men of genius rather than of rational thought. Ours is an intellectual, rational and scientific age. Every proposition advanced must be intellectually stated and logically proved. It must be related to and co-ordinated with past and existing knowledge. It must be strengthened by historical precedents. It must fit into some intellectual framework. In former times the sages and prophets arrived at their conclusions through insight and revelation. They claimed to have come to their knowledge through *sadhana*, intense contemplation and concentration, *yoga*. This entitled them to claim for their knowledge a divine authority. This claim of theirs was rarely challenged. If any evidence was needed it was supplied by the life they lived, the miracles they were supposed to have performed and by the literary and poetic style they used in their oral or written communication. The seers of old even claimed that fundamental and basic truths are incapable of proof through logic, Aristotelian or dialectical. For instance, Christ declared himself as the Son of God. There could be no rationally convincing proof for the assertion. However, His followers accepted it then and accept it even today as the Truth. Mohammed declared himself the messenger of God; and his followers, past and present, accept him as such. Sri Krishna boldly declared himself the Supreme Godhead, Purushottama, and the Hindus implicitly believe in it. The Buddha merely claimed that he had attained enlightenment, and for his followers he is the Enlightened One, who had attained *nirvana*. Some explanation, however, was given by these great ones which was considered conclusive only by the faithful. Also immemorial tradition, custom and usage made the common people take on trust many things which are questioned today. Whatever the reasons for belief and acceptance, the prophets of old were not required by their followers to prove their propositions as rationally and scientifically as are the reformers and revolutionaries of today. These cannot treat the public in such a cavalier way.

The average primitive and ancient mind seems to have been endowed with a great capacity for trust and belief. This was perhaps induced by its superior sensibility and a more vivid imagination. The critical faculty was not trained and developed. Once, therefore,

the prophet was accepted, his teachings prescribed the rule and the law. He was considered competent to deal with all the situations of life. This was good enough for the common people. For their special disciples, the teachers and the prophets had more psychological methods of approach. They prescribed for the initiate certain disciplines and routine practices. This resulted in inner experience and carried conviction.

In the present sophisticated times, however, we need a closer study of facts and more reasoned proofs. Under such circumstances it becomes necessary to find the rationale of a teacher's original thought and his actions based upon it. The master's concise and cryptic descriptions and explanations must be expanded, blanks filled in, seeming contradictions reconciled with his basic thought and some rational system evolved. These explanations must fit in with the reformer's life and work. All this can be done not only by painstaking study but also through experience gained in some activity based upon his philosophy of life.

Gandhiji follows in the footsteps of the old masters and reformers. He does not rely upon elaborate arguments. He rarely quotes authorities. He had made no special or systematic study of the many subjects he dealt with. His studies were of a general nature. He had made some study of religious literature but with the object of regulating his conduct as a responsible member of society and, thereby, of finding the truth or as much of it as was vouchsafed to a mortal, necessarily with limited capacity. This did not always call for rational consistency. Gandhiji has written a commentary on the *Gita*. But he has made no reference to the authority of the other scriptures or to earlier or contemporary commentators. Though his interpretation of the scripture is unique in several respects, he has not made any effort to refute the arguments of other writers and commentators. In spite of his economy of words he has created quite a literature about his own thought and work. Though unadorned, his style has a natural beauty of its own. He puts his ideas in a most simple and easily understood and yet expressive language. But even his thought needs elaboration, explanation and commentary.

Gandhiji's style of speaking and writing does not seem to appeal to the majority of the educated people of today. Yet it is these

latter who mould public opinion. They are the preachers, teachers and writers. In India they set the thought fashions. Their light, however, comes from the West, capitalist or communist and more recently even from Mao's China. For instance, Gandhiji did not talk of socialism, but of social justice, and not of capitalist exploitation but of the grinding poverty of the masses. This was often misunderstood, for today even a child is expected to know what is meant by socialism! That is what Jawaharlal used to say.

The present system of education, especially in India, is not designed to develop the powers of sensibility and imagination or observation. It is narrowly intellectual. The educated in India, therefore, can only enjoy and appreciate such ideas as are presented to them through books and magazines. They pass through the countryside insensible to the beauty of foliage and flower and the song of birds. But they enjoy these through prose and poetry books. They appreciate art only when it is analysed and reviewed for them. Even the misery, the poverty and the unemployment of the mass of Indian people, they understand only through learned statistical volumes, rather than by observing these in life as it is lived in our villages. The written word is the only source of information and knowledge for them. A few quotations from learned authors and authorities are considered more conclusive and carry more conviction than a mass of facts which need observation and independent evaluation. For instance, it was thought that the prosperity of Western Europe was based upon big centralised and mechanised industry. If India could have that, all its economic problems would be solved. It escaped the attention of the learned Indian economists that industry, if it is not backed by expanding agriculture, would fail to solve the problem of poverty. In the beginning of the 19th century the British Government had to repeal the Corn Law to allow cheap imports of food to sustain industry. The huge industrial production of America is based upon its prosperous agriculture. Seventy per cent of the population feeds the whole of the U.S.A. and a lot of grain is left for other countries or for destruction. So long as the communist countries have not solved the agricultural problem, they cannot catch up with American industry, production and prosperity.

The modern educated in India move generally in narrow and strictly confined intellectual grooves. What is not backed by authority is suspect. This is often proved by the reception given to new ideas by the academic mind. The incapacity to understand new ideas increases, if such ideas are expressed in the language of the common people and not that of the learned. The very simplicity acts as a barrier to proper understanding and appreciation. It is with us just as it was with the learned in Europe in mediaeval times. Whatever was not written in the classical languages, Greek and Latin, was not worthy of perusal. In India, even today, the Sanskrit pandits are not quite familiar with their mother-tongue. The form of this learned orthodoxy has changed in modern times but the spirit behind it remains the same.

Further, today nothing would be accepted unless it is presented in a "scientific" form. All investigation must be formulated in terms of cause and effect, and the effect must inevitably flow from the cause. If a proposition is stated in rigorous scientific terms and if it is shown that the effect flows from the cause logically, and the connection is ruled by the iron law of natural and historic necessity, then such a proposition is likely to be accepted, even though the causal connection may have been established by ignoring inconvenient and disturbing facts and factors. The so-called scientific law may be the result of specific local circumstances and contemporary times but if the proper form is observed it is accepted. Most of the generalisations in the social sciences are of this nature. They are arrived at by abstraction and over-simplification. Very often the material needed is not available, because it simply does not exist at the time. It can be available only after greater and more accurate knowledge, made possible by better methods of investigation, is gained. Most of the rapidly changing economic theories are of this nature. This reduces controversies in social sciences to a play of words without proper content. The approved form thus stands for valid reasoning.

Gandhiji does not, however, follow this method of proving his propositions. For instance, in placing before the nation the programme of khadi and village industry, he did not systematically work out in the language of the economists all the implications of his scheme. He did not write a learned thesis to prove the need for

and the value of decentralised industry in the economy of India, situated as it then was and is even now. He did not discuss such profound questions as value, cost of production, demand and supply, etc. Rather he gave simple and homely reasons and examples for his new and revolutionary ideas. He talked of the poverty of the masses and their enforced idleness. He emphasised the facts that real India lived in her villages. The idea of labour-using as opposed to labour-saving techniques was not worked out in appropriate technical terms, which only the learned could understand, appreciate and refer to, if need be, in their theoretical discussions. This was the method usually used by the young socialists in India in Gandhiji's days. At every conference of theirs a thesis was presented and discussed. Once the thesis proposed was that Gandhiji was the friend of the capitalists and the imperialists !

If the economic implications of cottage industry were not systematically worked out in technical language, its political implications received even less attention. Gandhiji talked of swaraj in terms of the *charkha* and khadi. But the connection was not brought out in an appropriate dissertation on the subject. No thesis was presented for discussion. No seminar or study circles were organised. The relation between the *charkha* and political freedom of India appeared remote and far-fetched. It is, however, quite possible to show the connection between the two. Gandhiji could have elaborated the idea of the economic organisation of the country on the basis of a voluntary co-operative effort beginning with khadi and progressively including other fields of economic and industrial life of the nation. This vast organising capacity and experience it afforded could in turn be translated into political terms of purpose, direction, discipline, self-sacrifice, recognition of social obligations, obedience to a leader, etc. All these qualities could be proved to be necessary for dislodging foreign imperialists' rule and rearranging the life of the country after independence on an egalitarian pattern. It could be shown that no national movement had ever succeeded without the acquisition of qualities inherent in the organisation of khadi and cottage and village industries. At every step of the argument appropriate historical parallels could be quoted. A scientifically arranged thesis could thus be built up. All this was not attempted by Gandhiji. Not that he could not do it. All

the relevant arguments lie scattered in his speeches and writings. But he had not the genius of a scholar buried in books. Moreover, as a practical reformer he had not the time to work in libraries and museums. He had to think even as he was acting and guiding a revolutionary movement. We have noted before his remark on reading Marx's *Das Kapital* that if given the leisure and the opportunity he could have written a more readable thesis.

Let us take another example. The new system of education for the millions, proposed by Gandhiji, was not worked out by him in any detail. All that he did was to indicate the direction in a few articles in *Harijan*. Fortunately, in this instance some educationists did what was needed. Their studies had made them familiar with modern trends in education in Europe and America beginning with Rousseau, the French philosopher, and going on to Dewey in America.

This is the modern procedure adopted in the West when a new idea is sought to be placed before the public for its acceptance. Before anything practical is done, the effort is to convert the mind by intellectual and logical reasoning and by a scholarly treatment of the subject. If properly done, the procedure makes it easy for the young to follow the developing argument. It makes little demand on their power of observation and their critical faculty, which develop later through age and experience. It is well known that socialism and communism in India were born in jails during the civil disobedience movement. The jails were filled with city youths fresh from schools and colleges. They had ample leisure there. They were cut off from all objective reality. They utilised their time in reading books. Communist Russia was at the time flooding the book markets of the world with its propagandist literature, even as it is doing today. Here our young minds found neatly worked out theses, based upon facts—may be partial—and apparently scientifically arranged and logically argued, abounding in significant technical terms and phrases and convenient slogans. It was not easy to suspect that certain historical facts were consciously or unconsciously left out of the argument. The gaps in reasoning were also hard to detect at the time. The new ideas carried away the intellectual mind more so because after World War I, nobody had a good word for the existing capitalist order

with its palaces and slums, its abundance for the few and near-starvation for the many, its periods of over-production and slumps, with mounting armaments and periodical imperialist wars for raw materials and markets.

The capitalist order had once claimed for itself the support of economists and social scientists. Here was its refutation in the same terms. The new ideology, while it fired the youthful imagination by its utopian aims, convinced the understanding by its claim to be based upon facts and its logical and scientific reasoning. It had also the prestige of success. In Russia it had swept off an age-long mediaeval tyranny, removed for the time being unemployment and periodic economic crises, characteristic of capitalist production. It had industrialised a backward agricultural country in a short time. It had made economic planning of a vast territory possible. It had established some sort of equality, maybe equality in poverty. The new inequalities that were growing were not detected then. This ideology assured its votaries of the inevitableness of the proletarian revolution in all countries, democratic, imperial, colonial, agrarian, industrial, mediaeval, modern, developed or backward. The world was very conveniently divided into two opposite camps of the haves and the have-nots, the capitalists and the proletariat. There were no other classes in society. There were no national barriers; there were no cross-divisions. The rich were a class by themselves the world over and so were the poor. The capitalists of all countries were united. They had common interests and no individual or national rivalries among them. Labour too was a world force and was not divided by geographical boundaries, national patriotism or prejudice. The two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, were ready for battle everywhere and the battle had already been decided by historical necessity in favour of the latter. The proletariat the world over had only to strike. And if they did, they could count on the new revolutionary Russian State, with its crusading millions, for help! With a classless society established throughout the world, men and women would live happily ever after !

Gandhiji offers no such convenient theories, logically and mathematically worked out. There are, as we have said, many gaps in reasoning, and apparent contradictions. Gandhiji thought

so rapidly that he jumped over many connecting links in the chain of reasoning. These links the practical worker or the theoretical student has to provide from his own intelligence, observation and experience.

Gandhiji discussed economic and political problems from a higher moral and humanistic point of view. If, therefore, a young man wants to study Gandhiji's economics and politics, he will have to content himself with very meagre systematic literature on these subjects. He will have to wade through a mass of material which he must arrange and systematise for himself. This is too much for our young university students or teachers, trained under the existing Indian system of education. They prefer ready-made, properly arranged and docketed knowledge. This Gandhiji unfortunately does not provide. It is the first major difficulty in understanding Gandhiji's thought and schemes of reform. His ideas need to be systematised, co-ordinated and correlated. The trends in his thinking on the many subjects he discussed are scattered throughout his writings. They have to be arranged. They have also to be presented in appropriate technical terms, made familiar by the current social sciences.

Gandhiji, as I have said earlier, views life as an organic whole. His view of human life is synthetic. His concrete schemes of reform are, therefore, intimately and organically connected with one another. Unity is achieved through some definite guiding and regulating ideas, values and principles.

Life means growth and the subject of growth is primarily the individual. The individual imagines, feels, thinks and wills. These processes are not easily or entirely amenable, so far as our knowledge goes at present, to instrumental measurement, mathematical calculation or to repeated experiments under controlled conditions. Life deals with the dreams, hopes, aspirations and ambitions of uncertain and often wayward and whimsical individuals. The individual thinks and works in and through society, which itself is a moving complex. In their march the individual and society are ever eluding any fixed categories of thought and rigid standards of measurement. Analytical and scientific study has, therefore, not the same scope for generalisation and forecast in the case of man and his society as in the field of physical sciences.

Also, analysis and science cannot deal with ultimate value and significance. A reformer, especially of Gandhiji's type, has to concern himself pre-eminently with value and significance. Mere study is not his object. He has to re-weigh and to re-value ideas, ideals and systems. He has to re-mould, re-fashion, re-create the individual and society. Analysis can provide him only with material, to use which for his synthetic and constructive effort, he must have vision.

In his synthetic attitude Gandhiji works in conformity with the genius of his people. The Indian tendency is not so much to analyse and separate as to co-ordinate the different trends and urges, to synthesise and to combine the new with the old. The religious history of India offers many examples of this synthetic approach. The *Upanishads* and the *Gita* represent the synthetic movements in old Indian religious thought. The Bhakti cults of the early Middle Ages of India gave an impetus to a fresh urge towards synthesis. Later, the Sant Mat movement of Nanak, Chaitanya, Narasimha Mehta, Kabir, Dadu and others represents, partly, the attempt to co-ordinate Hindu and Muslim thought. The credal and the separatist movements have been few and have generally not taken root in the soil. The Indian effort has always been to resolve apparent contradictions through a dialectical process of its own. This does not require destructive revolutions to eliminate the thesis and the antithesis and establish on their destruction a temporary and unstable synthesis. Co-ordination is achieved through the force of thought and by virtue of certain basic ideas. The genius of the Indian people is constructive, catholic and assimilative. It is neither negative nor destructive.

It is easy to find logical inconsistencies in synthetic thought. Synthesis implies the union of opposites that would appear contradictory in formal logic. One-sided and partial propositions, granted the basic postulates and presuppositions, can be proved by rules of formal logic. But the conclusions of such thought and reasoning, having been arrived at by abstraction, as in mathematics, are only formally and theoretically valid. Their application to life is strictly limited. Organic situations which grow through the flux of time and the changes brought about by conscious human thought and effort escape strict analysis or rules of formal logic.

Gandhiji as a reformer is concerned with the manifold complex

of life. Sometimes one aspect receives emphasis, at other times another. It all depends upon time, place, his audience and what needs emphasis for the time being. Such synthetic thought refuses to conform easily to a rigid system. It bases itself upon the moving facts of life and on the creative, dynamic and revolutionary thought of the guide or the leader. Judged by any other standard, it would present logical inconsistencies and contradictions. Synthetic thought is liabe also to many-sided interpretation. It is further liable to misinterpretation by over-emphasis or neglect of some of its many facets. It therefore, easily lends itself to attack from ignorant or uninformed, odponents, or the narrow-mindedness of followers. They can quote at will what would serve the purpose of their criticism. It is, therefore, no wonder that synthetic thought of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* should have found so many commentators through the ages.

Gandhiji seeks to synthesise the material and the spiritual, the individual and the collective life. He has, therefore, to deal with both the sets. As occasion demands, he emphasises the one or the other. For instance, he often said that he could "carry God to the poor in a bowl of rice". This being so, it is easy to misunderstand and misinterpret him by focussing attention and emphasis on one side and ignoring the rest of his thought and thus distorting and perverting his meaning and intention. Often he has ibeen attacked both by the spiritualists and the materialists. The former have accused him of lowering the purity of spiritual life by mixing it with economics and politics. The socialists and the communists have often charged Gandhiji with confusing economic and political issues with his ideas of truth and non-violence and his philosophy of means and ends. They asserted that they were out to achieve the political and economic emancipation of the people and should have nothing to do with moral and spiritual issues. People could not and, do not therefore, understand Gandhiji's insistence on spiritual values. They think that the questions of political freedom and economic equality are the supreme issues and public attention must not be diverted from these to moral problems which are irrelevant. They argue that nobody has the right to sacrifice the economic and political interests of the masses to considerations of morality; the destiny of a nation or of the masses cannot be played

with like that. Individuals may have the right, and under certain circumstances even the duty, to sacrifice their personal interests to achieve moral ends, but a nation has no right to sacrifice its material interests for moral ends. Such critics fail to see that Gandhiji never sacrificed what he considered the true interests of the country or of the masses; only he did not view those interests narrowly. He saw no inherent conflict between a country's real political and material interests and the fundamentals of morality. He thought that neither individuals nor groups can dispense with moral considerations. The price of an evil karma will have to be inevitably paid, if not immediately, in the long run, even in political and economic terms, as is amply borne out by history. The moral decay of a people has always preceded their physical and material degeneration.

Gandhiji was often accused of having accentuated the communal problem by his effort at spiritualising politics. Religion, the critics said, must be kept apart from politics. Gandhiji's effort to make politics conform to the fundamentals of morality is confused by critics with a desire to establish a theocracy in India.

Again, Gandhiji's advocacy of decentralised industry is, by partial, unconnected quotations from his writings, made out to be opposition to all centralised industry, conducted under favourable conditions. It is also complained that he is against all scientific knowledge and discovery because he advocates the pre-eminence of human values over mere physical conquest of nature and the multiplication of material wants and goods. Because he advocates education through purposeful activity, he is supposed to be against all intellectual knowledge. His critics fail to understand that what he aims at is deeper and fuller intellectual knowledge, which can be acquired best through co-operative work and experience.

Many critics find it difficult to understand Gandhiji, and point out his inconsistencies through isolated quotations from his writings and speeches. But he, because of his constructive genius and his synthetic attitude towards life, sees no contradictions where the learned see them. He sees, for example, no conflict between the interests of Hindus and Muslims. He claims to be a friend of both the communities, even as he claims to be the friend of all communities and at the same time to be an "orthodox Hindu". This, an orthodox

Hindu cannot understand. To a Muslim Leaguer, Gandhiji being an orthodox Hindu, must work for the good of the Hindus only. This must necessarily conflict with Muslim interests. The Muslim Leaguer could not understand that one may love one's community and yet be fair, and even generous to the other communities. On the other hand, the Hindu communalists accused Gandhiji of sacrificing Hindu interests to the cantankerous, intransigent and unreasonable demands of the Muslims.

Again, Gandhiji sees no conflict between the national good and the international good. The narrow nationalists, however, have not hesitated to denounce his humanism as surrender of national interests. The intellectual internationalists, on the contrary, accused Gandhiji of narrow and aggressive nationalism. Both sides support their respective arguments with what they consider appropriate quotations cut off from their context.

Once a British politician told Gandhiji in the course of a conversation that he (Gandhiji)must naturally love his countrymen better than the foreigner. He obviously expected a reply in the affirmative. But Gandhiji surprised him by saying that he made no distinction between man and man and that he loved the Englishman as well as the Indian. "What then about your creed of swadeshi, Gandhiji?" asked the distinguished foreigner. Gandhiji's reply was that service for his neighbour was the easiest and most effective way of serving humanity. Also, he served his neighbour to induce him to join in the service of humanity. "Why don't you in that case serve the Muslim League also?" asked the Englishman.. Gandhiji replied: "I am as willing to serve the League as the Congress but the League will have none of it. I cannot force my services on those who would not have them. I can, in that case, only take refuge in prayer."

Over-emphasis on one or the other aspect of Gandhiji's integral thought, backed by what are considered appropriate quotations from his copious writings, is not confined to his critics. It characterises some of his followers too. These have their own preconceived preferences. They, therefore, emphasise only such aspects of his teachings as lend support to their preferences, giving a view of his teachings which makes them appear partial and narrow. They think they are thereby serving the master.

If, therefore, proper justice is to be done to Gandhiji's thought, it must be considered in its entirety and in its proper setting in Indian conditions of the time and the problems he had to solve. The local and temporal over-emphasis, wherever it exists, must be toned down to bring out the proper relation of the parts to the whole scheme of his thought and philosophy. Any point or points under-emphasised must be clearly brought out. Sometimes gaps must be filled to make the thought and the expression consistent with the whole scheme. Often, the local colour has to be toned down to bring out a universal principle. Above all, the whole thought has to be correlated to Gandhiji's own conduct and life.

Gandhiji's thoughts and ideas are new and revolutionary and yet he claims no originality for them. He often asserts that in his ideas he merely follows in the footsteps of the old prophets and reformers and tries to "fulfil the law and the commandments" and is offering nothing new to the world. This was not said merely out of modesty. Gandhiji in disclaiming originality is only working in consonance with the genius of his people. The great men of India have rarely claimed originality for themselves. All their thinking, they held, could be traced back to the old, time-honoured and recognised authorities. Often, the very names of those who thus introduced new ideas are not known. These new ideas are supposed to have been handed down from antiquity. The Indian genius has generally worked impersonally and anonymously. Whatever the originality of the conception and the contribution, it is racial and not individual. Even in the aesthetic field the artist was supposed to work within the limits of long-established and recognised techniques and traditions. The most remarkable thing is that even so he could create new forms of beauty that were " a joy for ever". This conformity, however, is more apparent than real. Today one can trace in Indian thought the progress of ideas through the ages. Only the new thought and forms were subtly introduced under the guise of interpretation and commentary. The most original and revolutionary thinkers considered themselves as mere commentators, carrying on the old traditions and maintaining an unbroken continuity. Every thought and institution acccording to them was *puratana* and *sanatana*, old and eternal.

The Indian genius has been pre-eminently constructive. It does

not reject; it builds without destroying. Destruction is left to the corroding action of Time, which eliminates the worn out, the useless and pernicious. Superficially viewed, India may appear to have remained unchanged through the centuries. To the West it has been symbol of "the unchanging East". But behind this apparent sameness there have been tremendous changes, though imperceptibly brought in. Changes, as I said, have been introduced by means of commentary and interpretation. This mode of change takes time, but it gives every idea and institution opportunity to prove its worth. Very often only such parts are removed as have become useless and effete. Whatever is good remains. This evolutionary process ensures the real survival of the fittest. However, like everything good, it has its disadvantages. Sometimes it perpetuates old evils for long stretches of time.

Gandhiji works in this spirit of the old masters. Removal of untouchability is a great revolution in Hindu society. But he advocates it in the name of the purity of the ancient faith. He boldly claims for its abolition the authority of the most ancient traditions and well he may. There is no mention of untouchability in the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads*. The institution did not exist in those days. Even the caste system that developed later knows nothing of the fifth caste of untouchables. Again, truth and non-violence to Gandhiji were "as old as the hills". His application of these principles to politics and to collective life generally, he would have us believe, is also old. He only claims to use these on an extended canvas to enable him to offer a solution to the new problem, created by ever-increasing and more destructive weapons of violence invented by modern science and technology. The cottage and village industry programme is, of course, old, in spite of its new application and implications in an age of centralised and mechanised big industry. Basic education is at the root of all education. All knowledge, to begin with, was acquired by humanity through observation, activity and experiment.

All this is unlike the modern way and the modern spirit. Every author, philosopher and scientist claims "originality" and to have been the first in the field of discovery. They in this competition vehemently deny the like claim of rivals in the field of discovery. Not only individuals but nations too join in such con-

troversies on behalf of their citizens. The combatants forget that truth, however old, never becomes stale. It is always revolutionary, re-stated in fresh terms. If truth ever became stale or out of date, all ancient thought and wisdom would be valueless and would have only an antiquarian value.

Gandhiji's reputation for originality is accepted by the learned at its face value. They think that he tries to foist on the people some outworn and discarded thought or institution. In the words of the so-called radicals, he tries to put back the hands of the clock of progress. The contention is that what he advocates has been tried in the past often enough and found wanting. The criticism misses the revolutionary aim and spirit underlying Gandhiji's thought. The form is old but the spirit, the intention and the application are new. It is not so much the particular activity undertaken that is revolutionary, as the urge behind it, the spirit that inspires it and the purpose in pursuance of which it is undertaken. Removal of untouchability, advocacy of cottage industry, prohibition and even non-co-operation were advocated by previous reformers in India. Gandhiji has, however, made them dynamic and fitted them into a vast revolutionary movement for creating a more just and equitable social order. They do not merely reproduce the old urges or the old mentality. For instance, his advocacy of cottage and village industries did not mean that people should for ever remain content with their present oppressive poverty. His advocacy of decentralised industry in preference to centralised, mechanical big industry had a special purpose under the circumstances prevailing in India. It was to provide work for the unemployed and under-employed starving masses. As in former days, people were not compelled to take to it for want of scientific and technical knowledge. Now it served a new national purpose, that of providing the unemployed a better substitute than the unemployment dole in the West. It cannot, therefore, be considered as a backward or revivalist movement.

Closely connected with this tendency of Gandhiji to repudiate all claim to originality is his habit of fusing old terms and phrases for his revolutionary ideas and activities. He avoids the use of foreign and technical terms. The educated Indian mind today follows Western thought-and language-patterns. Not only the ideas but

also the terms in which they are expressed must look modern before they have any chance of acceptance. It is quite possible that if the *charkha* had been as fashionable among modern dames as knitting is, however superfluous it sometimes may be, it would have stood a better chance with the upper classes than it does today. After all, considering our tropical climate and the extent of unemployment and under-employment, the *charkha* is both more useful to the individual and the nation than knitting. If in his political writing Gandhiji, instead of using the terms 'non-violence' and 'truth' that have moral and spiritual associations and are readily understood by the mass mind, had used the words 'disarmament' and 'open diplomacy', there was every chance of his being better understood and appreciated by the modern mind. He would, in that case, have been regarded as a practical politician. He would have given proof of working for international peace. He might have even won the Nobel Peace Prize. Not only are disarmament and open diplomacy advocated by the capitalist democracies, they are advocated by the communists also. The communist aims include universal disarmament and open diplomacy. The politicians who advocate them do not cease to be practical and realistic. The difference is mostly in the terms used. As we have said before, the difference between Gandhiji and the politicians is that Gandhiji means what he says, while the politicians do contrary to what they avow.

If again, Gandhiji, instead of using the terms 'village and cottage industries' which the masses understand, had used the term decentralisation of industry, he would have been perhaps better understood by the educated. If his new scheme of education had been called polytechnicalisation of education as it is styled in Russia, it would have been perhaps better received by the educated. If instead of using the term 'Ramaraj' he had talked of democracy he would have been better appreciated by the educated in India. It is said that "words are a wise man's counters; they are the money of fools". But in India all intellectual transactions are carried on through counters which have no exchange value in reality.

Gandhiji, as a writer, has created, in his mother-tongue Gujarati and even in English, a distinct style of his own. Almost all that he has written is devoted to the cause of the poor and the downtrodden.

He has written no stories, novels, poems or dramas about the doings of the gods, rulers, kings, princes, aristocrats or capitalists. He has written no fairy tales. In spite of his spiritual outlook he never talked in terms of doctrines, or dogmas of any particular church or denomination. Yet he is not mentioned in conferences of the so-called progressive writers! They search all ancient literature and if they find an aristocratic writer who has incidentally advocated the cause of the poor, they class him as one of them, among the elect. Gandhiji is not accepted in this exclusive company of the aristocracy of proletarian writers. This is not entirely due to prejudice or political or ideological differences. It is partly due to the peculiarity of the language that he uses in his advocacy of the cause of the poor. He does not use the so-called scientific terms of the communist or socialist school. He talks of the establishment of justice and equality. These are not only political and legal but also moral terms. They have psychological implications. The socialists and the communists speak of exploitation, of class conflict and class war. That is the approved style. All evils of the world, it is felt, can be cured through external arrangements and organisation! No change of heart is deemed necessary!

The modern mind has to free itself from this "tyranny of words" before it can understand and appreciate Gandhiji's thought. It, therefore, becomes sometimes necessary, in order to minimise this difficulty in communication, to translate Gandhiji's ideas into the technical language current among the educated of today.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that Gandhiji had an evolving personality. In the making of the great geniuses of the world and its masterminds, nature seems to have played a much greater part than individual effort and nurture. The particular qualities that in after years distinguished them were as if born with them. Early in life they showed some unusual powers in the direction of their subsequent evolution. The original capacities were no doubt further developed through education, training and experience. But the particular abilities that marked their careers manifested themselves in a marked degree from the beginning of their conscious life. Men like the Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Sankara, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda belong to this class. Some of them made their best contribution in thought and action early in

life. Some of them died young, having made their full contribution in the field of their excellence. But it is not in the field of religion alone that such geniuses have risen through innate gifts of originality. In other fields of creative thought and action, in art, philosophy, science, literature and military strategy we see the same phenomenon of the rise of individuals, marked out by nature in early years to make their contribution to mankind's knowledge and advancement.

Gandhiji does not belong to the company of nature's great ones. He belongs rather to the ordinary run of humanity, from whose ranks exceptional individuals have sometimes arisen, through sheer force of their character and will power, by the painful process of growth and evolution. In early life Gandhiji gave little promise of his future work and mission. His career as a student was not marked by any particular outstanding ability. He says he was "good". He went to England to qualify for the bar, as any ambitious young man belonging to a middle-class family in those days might have done. His going to South Africa was a professional accident, which might have happened to any young Gujarati briefless barrister of those days. His prolonged stay there had no political urge behind it. It came about almost through a fortuitous circumstance in which design and choice played no part. All that distinguished him in his early age was his truthful nature, his utter sincerity and honesty. He says, "By instinct I have been truthful but not non-violent. In fact, it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence." (Any peasant in a village may be truthful!) Added to this was his capacity for hard work and attention to details. He manifested some earnest curiosity in religion in his youth. But that was natural for an educated young man of the time. India, owing to its contact with the West and with Christianity, as we have said, was then in some sort of religious ferment, resulting in a number of religious movements.

As a lawyer Gandhiji adhered to the highest standards of professional conduct. Often he went beyond these. He would not accept a brief unless he was satisfied about its merits. He always conscientiously laboured to give satisfaction to his clients. Gandhiji's advice was sought first as a lawyer. This professional work brought him into the political field. Once he had taken up political work, he

brought to bear on it his innate honesty, his industry and his shrewd practical ability. Ever since, his personality had been growing continuously and unceasingly. It is this continuous evolution that invested him with perpetual youth. Times change and along with them ideas, ideals and modes of thought and action. The greatest difficulty of age is to keep abreast of the times and to understand the young, appreciate and sympathise with their new ways, dreams and aspirations. Gandhiji somehow always kept up to date. So far as fundamentals go, he was ahead of his time. This was witnessed often enough. It came out in bold relief at the time of the 'Quit India' movement. This was something that took the bravest and most impetuous among his companions by surprise. The cautious advocate of individual civil disobedience, whom all the so-called leftists criticised for his halting policy, all of a sudden cast aside all hesitation and brushed aside counsels of prudence. He flung himself and the country into a movement which took away the breath of the hottest, the most ardent revolutionaries in the country. Even Subhas who opposed him called him the Father of the Nation and sought his blessings from abroad. A true revolutionary, Subhas recognised in him a greater one. This understanding of the dreams and aspirations of the young was the secret of Gandhiji's perpetual youth. This became possible because some of his fundamental ideas were so much ahead of his time that humanity may not be able to catch up with them for centuries. They appeared to be utopian. But he worked them in such a way that they became practical and yielded some tangible results. They represent the impossible probabilities of human nature, which have ever guided and inspired great prophets, reformers and revolutionaries through the ages.

Gandhiji was like a creative artist. The artist keeps young as long as his creative genius lasts. Gandhiji was creative up to the last. When in 1944 he came out of jail owing to his serious illness, he told me at Poona that he was not yet finished and that he would give one more battle to the British before he had done.

Gandhiji's youthful freshness was also due to his keen sense of humour. It did not desert him even in the most tragic situations. To a man with humour nothing is stale and commonplace. For him all situations have some dramatic element in them.

Some of Gandhiji's schemes took years to mature. Some he proposed late in life after great and anxious thought and experience.

His plan of a national language for India was up to the last developing and maturing. The first beginnings were based upon no clear idea.

His scheme of Basic Education was the result of years of observation, experiment and experience. His conception of non-violence also went through an evolutionary process. In World War I he advised people, who affirmed to be the citizens of the Empire and who believed that violence in a worthy cause was justified, to help the British war effort. In World War II, his attitude towards war from the very beginning was different. He could no more associate himself with it in any capacity. This was not merely due to the fact that his attitude towards British rule in India had changed. It was because his conception of non-violence had undergone evolutionary growth. His other ideas and schemes too had been changing and growing. As a matter of fact, throughout his life his personality kept growing and evolving.

The very consciousness of his life's mission had been growing upon him slowly and at first even unconsciously. He had to begin with little conception of his mission as a world teacher. At least he showed no awareness of it. In Champaran (1917), where he may be said to have first begun his political career in India, he talked of his past experiences but rarely of his future plans. The future for him was the development of his Ashram, through which he wanted to carry on his experiments in the constructive programme of his conception. This was more social and educative than political. Politics at the time was not his preoccupation. Rather he conceived of politics in terms of social reform. Addressing the students of Ahmedabad on one occasion in those days, he advised them to go and cleanse the dirty lanes of Ahmedabad. Therein, he said, lay swaraj. His conception of swaraj did not materially change in that it always had a social content and that power was justified only if it served and advanced the people; but he soon discovered that the dirty streets of Ahmedabad and other social and economic evils from which the land suffered were intimately connected with the country's political slavery.

It is because Gandhiji was growing and evolving and the process

of his growth never ceased, that he had such a great belief in the average man and woman. He never believed that others could not do what he could. He did not hold that he was making impossible demands on human nature or his countrymen. He often expressed this idea in public. In this connection we have already quoted at length the reply he gave when the Maulana praised him as an exceptional person during the A. I. C. C. meeting at Wardha in February 1942. He once said : "I have been taunted as a Bania, I regard that as a certificate of merit." This attitude towards common average humanity also accounts for his democratic spirit. Usually geniuses are inclined to be aristocratic.

The continuous growth and evolution of Gandhiji's personality and his ideas through the years present another difficulty in systematising his thought. Often it is not easy to discover the guiding lines in their purity or to reconcile varying statements made at different times and under different circumstances. There are apparent inconsistencies. Answering the charge of inconsistency, he says: "At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at the given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory an undue strain and, what is more, whenever I have been obliged to refer to my writings even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning my latest writings may yield, unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies."*

This evolutionary unfolding of Gandhiji's personality makes it easy for his critics to overemphasise verbal discrepancies or contradictions. Even a friendly reviewer, who feels that the apparent contradiction can be reconciled, finds the task a little difficult. This difficulty does not confront only the student of Gandhiji's thought. The practical worker, who has to carry on the details of his programme in the light of his ideas, also has to reckon with it. Often

**Harijan*, September 30, 1939.

he may guide himself by an old model or a former practice and find that he had not fulfilled the necessary requirements expected of him. Gandhiji met changing situations in new and varying ways. In his programmes he rarely repeated himself. The plan and technique followed in the different movements of satyagraha were not the same. It could not but be so with a living, dynamic and growing personality, who thought and acted in various fields of life's activity.

Did Gandhiji make no effort to reconcile the apparent contradictions in his thought and sometimes in his conduct? He made no serious effort at this. When he did this his intellectual explanations did not carry much conviction. Gandhiji was a man of few words, though the propositions that he laid down needed careful and detailed treatment. Often his explanations were coloured by his particular approach to problems. His fundamental values were spiritual and moral. These affected his outlook in other departments of life as well. Moral and spiritual values today are at a discount. They are suspect. Social, political and economic problems need a more specialised and detailed treatment than Gandhiji accords to them. Even the moral connection must be brought out in terms of special studies in these departments. Not only are the original explanations scanty, but answers to criticism are also brief. As he did not have the leisure to read much, a great deal of criticism made against him and his ideas rarely came to his notice. He believed that not words but his work and its practical results would carry conviction. Whatever criticism he cared to notice was from men whom he considered serious. Then too the treatment was sketchy. Gandhiji never indulged in polemical writing or pamphleteering. He merely gave brief answers to justify his ideas. He never carried the argument into the opponent's camp. To him justification of one's own viewpoint was the more useful and higher way. But relevant points in a controversy often come out more forcibly when the opponent's ideas are put under fire. Ideas are often best exposed through contrast and juxtaposition. Gandhiji had neither the time nor perhaps the genius for prolonged controversies. He was also too charitable to corner his critics and opponents. In the Champaran enquiry Gandhiji's colleagues, some of whom were lawyers of eminence,

would point out to him the weak points in the planters' case and would suggest cross-examination of planter witnesses. Gandhiji, however, never took advantage of these suggestions. He refrained from all such cross-examination as would put the planters in an awkward position. He wanted their goodwill and friendship. He knew he could not get these if he humiliated them by a rigorous cross-examination, bringing through their own admission the enormity of their conduct. He was often subjected to severe and sometimes uncharitable criticism. He did not, as a general rule, reply to criticism. He never analysed the opponent's own position or his philosophy. Not because these were not assailable—can there be any position which a clever lawyer cannot attack with some success?—but because he considered that this was not the way of non-violence. In the case of the Muslim League and the British Government, Gandhiji always adopted the same attitude. He often had in his possession documents which, if published, would have excited resentment and discredited important parties and personalities but he never published them to gain a tactical advantage. In his *Autobiography* he has left out things that would expose some of his colleagues and opponents. The chief consideration for not bringing his *Autobiography* up to date was that he would have to mention and criticise some living personalities, or those recently dead but who enjoyed public esteem.

Even when Gandhiji justified a course of action his intellectual arguments failed to do proper justice to the cause he was advocating. His judgments and the course he advised were usually correct. However, like a genius he had arrived at them more by intuition than by logical reasoning. The result was that the arguments he gave in their support were sometimes unconvincing or faulty. At best they appeared to be improvised arguments not thought of before. They seemed to be far-fetched. One often felt that better justification was possible. On the other hand, on some occasions Gandhiji's reasoning had the appearance of a trained and clever lawyer's argument, which sometimes made his opponents think of him as a Machiavellian politician.

Sometimes he advanced moral arguments even for natural calamities. This gave offence to the modern scientific mind which prefers rational explanation. In 1934 he advised suspension

of the satyagraha movement on a plea which nobody could understand or appreciate. We have already mentioned in an earlier chapter how he came to suspend even individual civil disobedience in 1934.

We have also given in this connection the example of the cause that Gandhiji assigned for the earthquake in Bihar.

Sometimes Gandhiji described socially or politically undesirable acts as sinful. To wear foreign cloth is sinful; to practise in foreign courts is sinful. To study in foreign institutions is sinful; to sit in legislatures imposed upon the country by the foreigner is sinful; to drink is sinful. All these lapses could be shown to be harmful either to the individual or the nation on socio-political and economic grounds; but to style them as sins is to refuse arguments resting on observed facts and rational deductions.

The present writer had a sannyasi brother who was living with him for some time at Sabarmati. He did not wear khadi. As a matter of fact he was indifferent as to what he wore or ate provided it was a vegetarian diet. He was truly a man of God. One day the writer expressed his doubt about the sinfulness of not wearing khadi to one of the orthodox members of the Ashram. I said to him: "How can I suppose that a genuine man of God was sinful because he did not wear khadi?" Quick came the reply: "We have to create this new sin." I said: "We have sins enough in this world. We need not create new ones."

It is a mercy that with Gandhiji these sins were not mortal but venial and they kept on periodically changing their character according to circumstances. Some of them rehabilitated themselves into colourless and morally neutral acts. Some of them became even necessary in changed situations. For instance, council entry, which in 1920 was a sin, was allowed in 1934 as an inevitable necessity. Gandhiji said that it had come to stay. But in the minds of a few legalistic followers of Gandhiji these sins were original sins and became fixed obsessions creating orthodoxy and fanaticism. It may, however, be argued in favour of Gandhiji : "After all, what's in a name?" Even if Gandhiji called certain passing acts sins, the masses would be better able to shun them. However, in properly understanding new thought and judging novel schemes the words used are of great importance.

The 'Quit India' movement had valid moral, economic, political, national and international reasons to justify itself. But on Gandhiji's part not sufficient arguments were put forward. When asked what was to be done to prepare for such a revolutionary movement, all that he could suggest was to intensify the *charkha* and the khadi movement. It was difficult to see the connection except through faith. This is perhaps not surprising. Very rarely have artists and creative geniuses been good at intellectual argument and rational justification. They are generally deficient in the critical and analytical capacity. It is hard to get from them appraisement even of their own work. Very often the merits of their creation can be best found and described by others. The economics of khadi can be better explained by an economist, not wedded to Western orthodox economic theories, than by Gandhiji, the originator of the idea. Better justice was done to the 'Quit India' resolution by a newspaper reporter and a trained critic like Louis Fischer. Justification, elucidation, evaluation and criticism are generally not very creative activities. Only in rare instances do they rise to creative heights. Mainly they are purely intellectual activities. As such they require the background of book-learning and comparative study. Gandhiji was neither equipped for this task nor had he the time or the natural aptitude in this direction. The result is that such intellectuals who accept his propositions or conclusions are thrown upon their own resources for argument and logical justification. With them it is not a case of mere blind following. They accept Gandhiji's great insight and his right judgment based upon it. But they have their own economic, political and social justifications for his correct conclusions. It is well known that Jawaharlal generally accepted Gandhiji's practical guidance, though he differed in his reasoning. With his modern outlook he often substituted his own reasoning. In many important resolutions of the Congress it happened that the operative part was Gandhiji's but the detailed reasoning was Jawaharlalji's. Gandhiji, within certain limits, did not mind the shade and the colour of the reasoning of his colleagues as long as his practical conclusions and schemes were accepted. His colleagues, on the other hand, found his judgment sound and his decisions good and proper. This agreement in disagreement on the part of some of

his colleagues was often described as a conflict between their head and their heart. It was supposed that while their head rejected Gandhiji's ideas, they were so sentimental as not to reject them or his leadership. Such an idea did scant justice to his colleagues who were leaders of people in their own right. Personal loyalties are good and proper in their place. But they cannot decide momentous political issues that concern the weal and the woe of millions of people and of generations unborn. Intensely attached to each other as they were, Gandhiji and his companions had no such overmastering personal loyalties as would make them subordinate public good to personal sentiment. There was no such thing as unthinking loyalty or blind following on the part of his principal colleagues. Men like C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Vallabhbhai, Rajaji, Jawaharlal and many others were incapable of acting as rubber stamps. Nevertheless they respected the greater insight and experience of Gandhiji in a new type of political activity like satyagraha.

Yet another great difficulty in systematising Gandhiji's thought arises from his making no distinction between the theoretically possible and what was practically so. In 1920, he talked of winning swaraj in one year, provided the nation carried out the programmes he had placed before it. That a nation, with centuries of slavery behind it, would be able to fulfil the programmes was only a theoretical possibility. Practically it was not only not possible but not even probable.

In his book *Hind Swaraj* he has talked of machinery and the factories as if these could be altogether eliminated from the life of a nation. He also talks of doctors and drugs as if they could be entirely dispensed with. There are many institutions whose functioning can and should be modified for social health; but Gandhiji would talk as if he wanted their entire elimination and held that this was possible. It is a mercy, however inconsistent it may look, that he did make use of doctors and medicines whenever it became absolutely necessary. Gandhiji's habit of stating his propositions and plans as if they were practical, in any case in the near future, presents one more difficulty in interpreting his thought. He always said that the theoretically possible was also the practical. The difference between the possible and the ideal must be clearly brought out to understand Gandhiji's thought. It is this confusion of the

ideal with the possible that provides a handle to the critics who speak of his being unpractical and utopian. It further makes his legalistic followers rigid and fanatical. He would claim that what he had written or said was practical. When he asked people during the 'Quit India' movement to "do or die", he was asking masses of men to do the impossible. People do not do and die. But if the work they had undertaken does not succeed in the way designed, they live and try again. When in 1947 he said that I, as the President of the Congress, must go and die in Noakhali and when some of his rigid followers thought I would do so, I could only smile. Not that I was afraid to die if the need arose, but to think that I was going to Noakhali merely to die was absurd. If I wanted to die, I would have chosen a more beautiful spot than East Bengal, say the Himalayas or Kashmir. Of course, Gandhiji laid down certain conditions which would make the ideal the practical. But his critics and even some of his followers deliberately or unconsciously forget those conditions and make him look absurd.

Gandhiji's thought then must be judged and evaluated on its own merits and not always on Gandhiji's arguments. The student must not content himself with Gandhiji's reasoning and his style or the words and the expressions he used. Like every great reformer his thought is greater than his words and arguments. Often his conduct is more revealing and eloquent than the arguments he advances for a particular course of action. In studying him, therefore, note must be taken not only of the spoken or written word but also of his life, the way he faced and met critical situations, organised institutions and behaved towards friends and opponents. His public and private life were an open book. Therefore, his writings must be studied along with it. The writings alone may not bring out the full implications of his philosophy of life, individual and social. Further, the student must rely on his own intelligence, knowledge and experience for a proper understanding of Gandhiji's ideas, policies and programmes.

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# Gandhiji and Religion

GANDHIJI was not a philosopher or a theoretician who developed his theories and evolved a system which would give a rational explanation of life and its different facets and, if possible, its ultimate goal. If one wants to understand Gandhiji's life and work, one must try to understand his spiritual ideas and ideals in the light of which he conducted his struggles against group injustice and tyranny and carried out his reform programmes. Gandhiji's ideas grew and developed as he had to face practical situations and find solutions to problems which confronted him throughout his life.

The establishment of British rule in India led to a review of existing ideas, ideals and institutions. The first impact of this contact was naturally in the religious field. This was because most of the ideas, ideals and institutions in India were, more or less, connected with religion. The result of this was the rise of new reformist sects like the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. Along with the growth of these reformist sects, there were also movements within the orthodox Hindu fold to interpret and restate the basic doctrines of Hinduism. This resulted in the establishment of the Arya Samaj and the interpretation of Hinduism by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, Ramatirtha and the Theosophical movement under the lead of Mrs. Annie Besant. This spiritual ferment was confined to Hindu society, as the Hindus more than any other major community in India had taken to the new system of education introduced after the advent of British rule.

Gandhiji was brought up, as we have said before, in a religious atmosphere. He belonged to a Vaishnavite Hindu family influenced to some extent by Jainism. His mother was a devout woman. His father often invited the learned of different faiths to discuss religious problems. In England his insistence on vegetarian diet brought him into contact with such idealist Englishmen as had given up meat diet and had become vegetarians. He also came under the influence of the Liberal thought in England of the 19th century. He had made a study of the Bible, especially the New Testament. He had also made himself familiar with the writings of Tolstoy and Emerson. In South Africa he had to work among people of many nations, races and colours. He came in contact there with Christian missionaries. Some of them were anxious to save his soul by converting him to the True Faith, Christianity. Others were not concerned so much with his soul as with the work that he was carrying on there for the uplift of his countrymen who had become citizens of South Africa. All these contacts confirmed him in his own faith, Hinduism. But his Hinduism had little to do with its forms or ceremonials and the institutions that it had created within itself. He rejected everything that was against reason and against humanity. Though he loved to call himself an orthodox Hindu, he did not subscribe to the pernicious and cruel system of untouchability. He did not believe in the caste system as it prevailed in India. About this he says: "God did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority; no scripture which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance. It is a denial of God and Truth which is God." He did not observe Hindu ceremonials or holy days. He rarely visited temples except sometimes through courtesy. Even then he would not enter a temple which was not open to the untouchables whom he called Harijans. He thought image worship and going to the temples were good for those who needed such props to their faith. His Hinduism was based on the teachings of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*. Like other great reformers in Hinduism he wrote a commentary on the *Gita*. He moulded his life in accordance with the basic teachings of this scripture. He was a *karmayogi*, as described in the *Gita*. In accordance with its teachings he held that good works must be performed in the spirit of sacrifice to the God of

humanity, especially in serving *daridranarayan*, God of the poor and the downtrodden. He says: "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone." He also says that whenever in difficulty he had recourse to the *Gita* and it was the solace of his life. He held that through work, done as sacrifice, without attachment, and without hankering after desired results and with equanimity, one could get the *summum bonum* of life, "salvation" or as he often said in accordance with the best thought of Hinduism, "self-realization". About this he says: "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all."

For Gandhiji religion and morality were the same. They were interchangeable terms. This was natural for a *karmayogi*, who has to act in every sphere of life. Gandhiji did not believe that religious activity was separate from other activities of life, which kept society together. For him the basic principles of this morality were truth and non-violence. These two principles were elaborated into eleven principles and a verse containing them was recited morning and evening at his prayers. These are:

> *Ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, asangraha, sharira-shrama, aswada, sarvatra-bhaya-varjana, sarvadharma-samanatva, swadeshi, sparshabhavana* (non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity, non-possession, physical labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equality of all religions, swadeshi, discarding of untouchability).

The first five of these are the basic moral principles of Hinduism and Jainism. The six others are their derivatives suited to the requirements of the times.

Believing in fundamental moral values common to all the great religions of the world, he said he had nothing new to give to the world. "Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills." He often said that he had no desire to create a new sect. As a matter of fact, sects are generally created not by prophets and reformers but by their followers,

Christ said : "I have not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil it." It can, therefore, be said that Christ was not the first Christian. However, a law can only be entirely fulfilled when it is extended and enlarged to embrace the whole of humanity. Whatever Gandhiji might have said, all those of the present generation and the innumerable generations to come who follow Gandhiji's ideas and ideals in their spirit are truly his followers. In this who knows, as Christ said, "the first shall be the last and the last first? "

With the *Gita* he also believed that all religions are different paths leading to the same goal. He says : "Religions are different roads converging upon the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal ? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals... So long as there are different religions, every one of them may need some distinctive symbol. But when the symbol is made into a fetish and an instrument of proving the superiority of one's religion over others', it is fit only to be discarded." He was, therefore, tolerant of all religions, nay, he accepted their fundamental teachings. These regulated men in performing their daily tasks, which must be guided by the basic principles of morality. The moral principles were the same in all the great religions of the world. Gandhiji says: "I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that; if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another."

Though he believed that all religions were true, he did not consider them as infallible. They were the creation of men and therefore had something of their imperfection. He says: "After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have error in them." He further says: "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired.... I decline to be bound by any interpreta-

tion, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense."

Gandhiji, as we have said, made no difference between religion and morality. Dharma, not as popularly understood now but as it was understood and used by the ancient Rishis, must inform and guide all our activities. "Dharma" means that which supports.

As Gandhiji believed in the basic teachings of all the great religions of the world, he with his co-religionists did not believe in proselytizing activity. In his Ashram there were Muslims and Christians and pandits, but he never tried to convert them to Hinduism or even to his own brand of Hinduism. One day Mirabehn expressed a desire to become a Hindu. Gandhiji's reply was that she should live in her own faith. By becoming a Hindu, she would not, in any way, improve her moral conduct or values. It was not necessary for a person to change his religion but to act according to the basic principles of his or her own religion. It was necessary for a Hindu to be a good Hindu, as it was necessary for a Muslim to be a good Muslim and a Christian to be a good Christian. Speaking to Christian priests in India, he told them that the humanitarian work that they did was good; but it would diminish its value if it was done with the motive of converting the followers of other faiths to Christianity. He says: "I do not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating."

He did not think that religion was to be practised in a cave or on a mountain-top. It must manifest itself in all the actions of man in society. He says : "I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. The same activity may be governed by the spirit either of religion or of irreligion. There is no such thing for me therefore as leaving politics for religion. For me every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion."

He believed in God but for him God was the moral law, dharma. He therefore considered that all those who believed in the moral law were spiritual even though they were so-called atheists. He says that "Truth is God". "To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the

source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these." Again he says: "There can be no manner of doubt that this universe of sentient beings is governed by a Law. If you can think of Law without its Giver, I would say that the Law is the Lawgiver, that is God. When we pray to the Law, we simply yearn after knowing the Law and obeying it. We become what we yearn after." He uttered Ramanama though he made it clear that Rama of his conception was not the husband of Sita or the son of Dasaratha but he who abides in the hearts of men, the *Antaryami*. However, like the prophets of old, he did not confuse the minds of the ordinary man and woman to whom Rama and Krishna are the Supreme Beings even though they took upon themselves a human form and worked for the establishment of righteousness, dharma and the destruction of *adharma*. For himself he believed in a formless and attributeless God. He frankly admits that existence of God cannot be proved by reason though it is not against reason. Even if he could not prove His existence by rational arguments which may not convince, he felt it within himself. He says: "There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent.

"I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever-changing, ever-dying, there is underlying all that change a Living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates. That informing Power or Spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

"And is this Power benevolent or malevolent ? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme God." The great saints and sages of all ages and climes have believed in God and their unbiased evidence kept before us through their life and work must, he held, be conclusive.

Believing in God, Gandhiji had great faith in prayer. Morning and evening there were prayers in the Ashram. When he was on tour, the evening prayers were performed in public before ever-increasing congregations. In this prayer no image or symbol was kept. He did not believe in image worship for himself but he had no objection to it for those who needed such symbols. He says: "I do not disbelieve in idol worship. An idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me. But I think that idol worship is part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism....I do not forbid the use of images in prayer. I only prefer the worship of the Formless. This preference is perhaps improper. One thing suits one man; another thing will suit another man, and no comparison can fairly be made between the two." His prayers were not petitions. They were in praise of God and they were the yearnings of the soul. They also were meant to strengthen man and keep him away from earthly temptations. He says: "The prayer has saved my life. Without it, I should have been a lunatic long ago. I had my share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They threw me in temporary despair. If I was able to get rid of that despair, it was because of prayer. It has not been a part of my life as truth has been. It came out of sheer necessity, as I found myself in a plight where I could not possibly be happy without it. And as time went on, my faith in God increased, and more irresistible became the yearning for prayer. Life seemed to be dull and vacant without it. I had attended the Christian service in South Africa, but it had failed to grip me. I could not join them in it. They supplicated God, I could not; I failed egregiously. I started with disbelief in God and prayer, and until at a late stage in life I did not feel anything like a void in life. But at that stage, I felt that as food is indispensable for the body, so was prayer indispensable for the soul. In fact, food for the body is not so necessary as prayer for the soul. For starvation is often necessary to keep the body in health, but there is no such thing as prayer starvation. You cannot possibly have a surfeit of prayer. Three of the greatest teachers of the world—Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad——have left unimpeachable testimony, that they found illumination through prayer and could not possibly live without it. Millions of Hindus, Mussulmans and Christians find their only solace in life in prayer. Either you

call them liars or self-deluded people. I will say that this 'lying' has a charm for me, a truth-seeker, if it is 'lying' that has given me that mainstay or staff of life without which I could not live for a moment. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact, I have found people who envy my peace. That peace comes from prayer. I am not a man of learning, but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent as to the form. Everyone is a law unto himself in that respect. But there are some well-marked roads, and it is safe to walk along the beaten tracks, trodden by the ancient teachers. I have given my personal testimony. Let everyone try and find that as a result of daily prayer he adds something new to his life."

Never in his prayer-meetings was any patriotic song sung. Good and desirable as love of one's country may be, it was not the love of God. His prayer-meetings were also occasions for him to take the public into confidence about what was happening in the councils of the great, whether in the national organisation or in the Government. He took them into confidence to the extent that was permissible and desirable. He did this because he wanted from the people enlightened co-operation in the national struggle which was not only meant to remove the foreign yoke but was also meant for their political, economic, social and, above all, their moral advancement. He often said that to the extent India was reformed, it would be free. A reformed India would be a free India.

Gandhiji believed in self-discipline. He felt that his own personal progress and all that he had been able to achieve was because he lived a life of discipline. He held with the *Gita*, "To him who is temperate in eating and recreation, in his effort for work, and in his sleep and wakefulness, Yoga becomes the destroyer of his misery."*

He believed in occasional fasting. He thought it helped in the concentration of mind. Apart from this he held that fasting had purificatory effect. Sometimes he fasted for the moral lapses of those who lived or worked with him, because he considered himself responsible for their conduct. Any misbehaviour on their part was a proof of some imperfection in him. As he became purer his surroundings would, he thought, adequately respond to the change.

He believed in taking and keeping vows. He thought that

*The *Gita*, Chapter VI-17.

their proper observance strengthened the will. However, there is the danger, the present writer feels, that vows taken and broken repeatedly weaken the will and its power of resistance to evil.

We have said that Gandhiji's life was well-regulated. But he was not a flesh-mortifying ascetic. Believing in the philosophy of *karmayoga*, right action, he could not afford to impair his health by the mortification of the flesh as is done by some ascetics. The restrictions in diet that he placed upon himself were due to circumstances. His vow not to take more than five varieties of food a day was taken because wherever he went, generous and hospitable hosts served him various rich and luxurious dishes. That his kind hosts may not put themselves to extra trouble on his account and to avoid waste in a poor country like India, and not for ascetic reasons, he put the above restriction on himself. He also felt that increasing one's wants beyond a particular limit, instead of benefiting an individual, became a· burden on him. Gandhiji had a good appetite and whatever food he took at the time was healthy and pure. He took time to eat his food and seemed to enjoy it. If a person fell ill in the Ashram, everything prescribed for him by the doctor was made available, whatever the cost. He discarded his shirt and cap and satisfied himself with a loin cloth. This was due to the fact that India in those days did not produce enough cloth, especially hand-spun and hand-woven, to satisfy the minimum needs of the people. Also, this loin cloth was meant to be his identification with the poor. Other restrictions of this nature were imposed because he wanted his entire life to be devoted to the service of humanity. It is a fact that not only public workers fighting for a cause, but all original thinkers and serious workers in any field of life's activity must and do limit their physical wants. Only in a Philistine age, which needs constant excitement and believes in the multiplication of physical wants as a mark of culture, will Gandhiji's life of simple living and high thinking be considered ascetic.

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# Theory of Satyagraha

WE have said earlier that Gandhiji was drawn in the South African struggle, because the domiciled Indian immigrants there suffered from many political, economic and social disabilities. He had, therefore, to search for a method and technique of resistance which would remove these disabilities. The technique to be employed must be in consonance with the fundamental moral principles which guided his life. What were these principles which Gandhiji applied first in South Africa and then on a wider scale in India to redress political, economic and social wrongs and injustice and assert the claims of truth, justice and fairplay? His movements have been variously called passive resistance, civil disobedience, non-co-operation. Gandhiji, however, did not feel that these terms fully conveyed the moral and spiritual aspects of the struggles he organised. He, therefore, gave them a significant name, 'satyagraha', which means the pursuit of truth and steadfastness therein.

Satyagraha believes in the brotherhood of man. It rejects the biological concept of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. It rejects Hobb's conception of human life as "the struggle of all against all". It rather believes in love, mutual aid and co-operation, as the basis of social intercourse and of human progress. It believes in the Vedantic doctrine that "all life is one", or as the Christians put it, "We are members one of another." Human life and society are in a sense organic. One cannot injure

one's neighbour without injuring oneself. Gandhiji says: "Man should earnestly desire the well-being of all God's creation and pray that he might have the strength to do so. In desiring the well-being of all lies his own welfare; he who desires only his own or his community's welfare is selfish and it can never be well with him." This means that human life, individual and group, social, economic and political, cannot be divided into separate and airtight compartments. Gandhiji says: "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide life, social, economic, political and purely religious, into watertight compartments. I do not know of any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis of all other activities, which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing." What is good and moral conduct in one department of life must be so in the rest of life. The confusion and chaos that exist today in the collective life of humanity, specially in the political field, are due to the fact that humanity has recognised a dual standard of morality, one for regulating individual and social intercourse and another, a contrary one, for regulating conduct in the field of politics, internal and international, specially the latter.

Throughout the ages, social morality has been far in advance of political, specially inter-group morality. In social life, whether we follow the moral law or violate it on account of our weakness, selfishness, appetites and passions, we recognise its validity and praise those who follow it. We do so when our interests are not involved. Social conduct is progressively based upon mutual trust, co-operation, truth and non-violence. Political, specially inter-group, intercourse, however, is guided by selfishness, distrust, fraud, hatred and ultimately violence and war. In inter-group relations, we have the law of the jungle, where might alone is right and success the sole moral law. While in their social intercourse individuals are enjoined to act as neighbours and on occasions even to sacrifice their self-interest for them, groups and nations in their intercourse consider one another as actual or potential enemies and to beware of one another. A nation which sacrificed its supposed self-interest for that of its neighbour would be considered foolish. This mutual distrust and enmity is heightened a hundredfold in times of war. It unleashes the basest of human passions under the moral guise

of patriotism, bravery, self-sacrifice and even altruism. The individual is thus unconsciously betrayed into immoral and anti-social conduct. The low standards that are approved of and followed in political intercourse tend progressively to lower our moral standards in the social field. This is amply illustrated by the marked deterioration of standards of morality in social life, after every war, more especially after the last two global wars.

Certain virtues, like bravery, sacrifice, patriotism, discipline, etc., have been traditionally associated with war, but these exist no more, owing to the new destructive weapons created in its service. War only works for destruction and ruin, physical and moral. It is now only a bad historical habit, bereft of all virtue. Further, instead of solving problems, it complicates them. If we historically trace the causes of war, we shall find that the imbalance and injustice created by a previous conflict were the cause of a subsequent conflict. World War I was the result of the imbalance that had already existed. The unjust peace after World War I was the cause of World War II. Any subsequent world war will be the result of the unjust peace established after it.

Why is this so? It is because humanity has so far been trying to solve its inter-group problems by means through which they can never be solved. Evil cannot be cured by evil, nor hate conquered by hate. "Satan cannot be exorcised by Satan." The only way to cure hatred is by love. This is what the prophets and reformers have held. Gandhiji says: "It is no non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even this most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to do it." Humanity must, therefore, find some other way than crooked diplomacy, violence and war for the solution of political and international problems involving injustice, tyranny and cruelty. Gandhiji's satyagraha shows the way. It is a moral substitute for war.

The first condition of satyagraha then is strict regard for truth. Non-violence is the natural consequence of truth. Gandhiji says that he had a great regard for truth from his childhood. Non-

violence was the natural corollary of truth. He thinks that wherever there is violence, untruth will creep in. A person using violence, even in the service of a good cause, must use stratagems to save himself while attacking his enemy. This would involve secrecy and deceit. Gandhiji says that truth and non-violence are like the two sides of an unstamped coin. They cannot be separated. About non-violence he says: "I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and therefore there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living. And if that is the law of life, we have to work it out in daily life. Whenever there are jars, wherever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love. In this crude manner I have worked it out in my life." Further he says: "Prophets and *avatars* have also taught the lesson of *ahimsa* more or less. Not one of them has professed to teach *himsa*. And how should it be otherwise? *Himsa* does not need to be taught. Man as animal is violent, but as Spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within, he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards *ahimsa* or rushes to his doom. That is why the prophets and *avatars* have taught the lesson of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice, etc.—all attributes of *ahimsa*." The satyagrahi must, therefore, be open and fearless, prepared cheerfully to suffer the consequences of his resistance and disobedience to what he considers as unjust and unlawful authority.

In addition to his two principles of truth and non-violence, Gandhiji enunciates a third principle for the conduct of a satyagrahi. This is the principle of purity of means. He holds that ends and means are convertible terms. Ends are only the end results of the means used. If the latter deviate from the moral law, the end, whatever its outward appearance, will not be the one desired and worked for. If a person is responsible for the ends he keeps before himself, he is equally responsible for the means he uses. It is not only bad ends that create bad karma, but every action performed creates its own karma, good or bad, as the means may be.

As a matter of fact, this principle of purity of means flows from the moral principles of truth and non-violence. Unfortunately, it has not been recognised and observed in human history. Often violence and untruth are used for the success of the causes

that have been held to be good. The Christian Churches in the Middle Ages in Europe did not hesitate to murder fellow human beings in the supposed service of their master, Jesus Christ, whom they called the Prince of Peace. The Catholic Church set up the Inquisition to torture and murder even those who believed in Christ, but who did not conform to the "true and the only Church of Christ". This has also been the case with other religions which believe that they have the monopoly of Truth. The modern example of the end justifying the means is furnished in the political field pre-eminently by the Communists, the Fascists and the Nazis. The aims of the Communists, the establishment of equality, justice and freedom, are laudable, but in their pursuit they use means which are inconsistent with the ends. Fanatics of all faiths, religious, political, economic and social, have throughout the ages tried to accomplish ends they considered supreme by means that are not moral. Gandhiji makes no distinction between ends and means. He says : "Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.... They say 'means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end." To a person who argued that in the service of laudable ends any means would be justified, Gandhiji said: "Your belief that there is no connexion between the means and the end is a great mistake. Through that mistake even men who have been considered religious have committed grievous crimes. Your reasoning is the same as saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed. If I want to cross the ocean, I can do so only by means of a vessel; if I were to use a cart for that purpose, both the cart and I would soon find the bottom. 'As is the God, so is the votary' is a maxim worth considering. Its meaning has been distorted and men have gone astray. The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connexion between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." The problem then is, can conflicts, specially between groups and nations, and those created by injustice and tyranny, be solved by means which will leave behind no evil results flowing from the use of doubtful means like hate and violence? Gandhiji believed

that the problems of humanity created through the exploitation of man by man and group by group could be solved through satyagraha, the organised use of truth, non-violence and the purity of means.

We have said that the advocates of war claim certain virtues like patriotism, discipline, bravery, courage, etc. These virtues are not the monopoly of war. Satyagraha properly organised will have all the virtues claimed by war without its destructive qualities, material and moral. In addition to bravery and courage, satyagraha claims for itself the great virtue of fearlessness. A violent soldier may be brave and courageous but he is never fearless. He wants to kill, yet does not want to be killed which means that he is afraid of death. He is also afraid that he may be deserted by his companions. He is afraid even of himself lest in a weak moment in order to save himself from pain, wounds and death, he might desert the cause that he has made his own. Out of fear, he may betray his companions. The satyagrahi is fearless. His resistance is open. He therefore eschews secrecy. His is an open revolt. He is willing to bear the consequences of his non-violent opposition or revolt. Under certain circumstances he invites these consequences. He is not afraid of death. We have seen how in his trials Gandhiji asked the trying magistrates to award him the highest punishment laid down by law. Gandhiji says: "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity." "I saw that nations like individuals could only be made through the agony of the Cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself."

We have said that Gandhiji believes with the religious and the mystic in the oneness of all life. He, therefore, for the solution of political and international problems as for the regulation of individual and social conduct, advocates the morality practised and preached by all the great religions of the world and their founders of loving one's enemies and doing "good to those who do evil unto us". But unlike the mystics of old, Gandhiji does not say

"resist not evil". Rather, he does not want submission to evil. He wants it to be resisted. He does not advise us to turn the other cheek; he wants the cheek to be made so tough that the striker may find it inconvenient to strike. He wants groups and nations to organise themselves for righteous resistance.

It will not, however, be quite correct to say that the prophets of old like the Buddha, Mahavira and Christ wanted evil to go unchecked. Their resistance to evil was psychological and not external or organisational. Moreover, their mission was to guide individuals in their pursuit of the supreme good, their salvation. They perhaps thought that if there were more such individuals who were so guided, they would have their beneficent effect on society. They did not directly concern themselves with politics or international problems. They had among their followers kings, politicians and soldiers who used violence in group conflicts. Yet salvation was not denied to them. Gandhiji's satyagraha attempts to do both, i.e., to guide the individual towards the goal of higher life and also to solve political and international problems. This is his special contribution as a reformer. Once when somebody said of him that he was a saint, his reply was : "I am a politician trying to be a saint." Often Gandhiji was asked why as a religious man he should take part in politics. His reply was that all that concerns humanity must be the concern of the religious man. He says: "I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. The same activity may be governed by the spirit either of religion or of irreligion. There is no such thing for me therefore as leaving politics for religion .... Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along." He did not believe in a double conscience, one for the regulation of social intercourse and another, a contrary one, for the regulation of political and group relations.

There is yet another difference of approach distinguishing Gandhiji from the old reformers and prophets. He did not think with the old masters that "the poor are with us always" and that poverty can be mitigated only through the charity of the rich. They therefore enjoined them to give a portion of their wealth to the

poor. Gandhiji did not think that poverty must be the lot of the majority of mankind. He believed that poverty and bad conditions of living could be cured by changing the existing social order. He believed that all wealth was socially produced and, therefore, should be equally distributed among those who helped in its creation. If that were too idealistic in this defective world, socially produced wealth must be equitably distributed. Even if this were not practicable in the conditions existing in India, he felt that no worker in the field or the factory or elsewhere should be denied the essentials of life, food, clothing, housing, etc. The economic life of the community must be so arranged as to ensure these. He did not believe in private charity. He thought that it degraded the recipient and not unoften the giver thereof.

The movement to throw off foreign rule was also conceived by Gandhiji in more socially comprehensive terms than similar movements in the past. It must not be merely political freedom conceived in terms of the removal of the foreigner. The domination of a section of the nationals of a country can be as unjust and cruel as that of the foreigner. We have the example of the untouchables in India. When America rose in revolt against British domination, it did not think in terms of removing the injustice and cruelty from which the negroes suffered and even now suffer there. The Founding Fathers in America did not think even in terms of the removal of the exploitation of the white by the white. This has been generally so in the independence movements the world over. Gandhiji held that we could not demand justice from others unless we did justice to those who were suffering at our hands.

Gandhiji, therefore, in addition to the removal of foreign rule, wanted to establish in India a democratic order, free from political, economic and social exploitation. To achieve those aims he devised his 'constructive programme'. This programme was to be carried on side by side with the struggle for independence. Under foreign rule, however, what was possible was only pioneer work in that direction. This was to be comprehensively carried out when the representatives of the people were in charge of the Government of free India. To the extent we have failed to carry out this programme during the last twenty-two years, the nation has suffered.

The technique that Gandhiji prescribes to resist political and

inter-group tyranny and injustice is that of non-co-operation. Once co-operation is withdrawn, exploiters and tyrants will find it difficult, if not impossible, to perpetrate their iniquity and injustice. Whatever may have been the case in the past, the complex society of today cannot function without mutual co-operation. Injustice and tyranny today, more than ever before, depend upon the conscious or unconscious, voluntary or forced co-operation of the victims. This is powerfully illustrated in the industrial field. Through strikes and non-co-operation, Labour has been able to get a more equitable deal from capital than ever before in human history. It has been able to extract from the employers higher standards of wages and better living conditions. In some countries, Labour's success has been so phenomenal that it has been able to win over the electors to vote it into power and establish Labour governments working for the common good. In all these long struggles, Labour has found that it is most effective when its activities are kept within the limits of non-violence. Labour leaders know from experience that once they indulge in violence, they will be playing into the hands of the capitalists. They with the help of the State, which commands the police and the military, will be able to put down any strike, however well and carefully organised. Often capitalists employ *agents provocateurs* to incite the labourers to violence, so that the Government with its overwhelming physical might may suppress a legitimate strike on the plea of keeping law and order.

A distinction must, however, be drawn between strike and satyagraha. For the former, non-violence is only a convenient policy. It is not a principle of life. Such physical non-violence Gandhiji calls the non-violence of the weak. While out of its physical incapacity Labour keeps its movement within the limits of non-violence, it does not cease from hating its oppressors, nay, it would use violence if there were any possibility of its success. Gandhiji insists not only on external but also on internal non-violence, that is, freedom from mental violence and hate. He wants a satyagrahi to be non-violent in thought, word and deed. There is yet another difference between satyagraha and strike. While the satyagrahi cheerfully bears the penalty attached to his disobedience to law and does not want to inflict any injury on those who enforce it, the striker in the industrial field would, if he could, avoid the penalty attached

to his disobedience, and if possible try to injure his opponents.

It is said that Gandhiji's idea that injustice can be removed through truth, non-violence and purity of means is too idealistic to be put into practice. Those who make this criticism forget that by these means Gandhiji achieved a great measure of success in the movements he led in South Africa and in India. Gandhiji did not believe that the practice of non-violence in the political field was beyond the capacity of man. He says: "The first condition of non-violence is justice all round in every department of life. Perhaps, it is too much to expect of human nature. I do not, however, think so. No one should dogmatize about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation....Non-violence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear. The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He recks not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practise *ahimsa* to perfection. The votary of *ahimsa* has only one fear; that is of God. He who seeks refuge in God ought to have a glimpse of the *Atma* that transcends the body; and the moment one has a glimpse of the imperishable *Atma*, one sheds the love of the perishable body."

Let us, however, examine the practical schemes that politicians propose for the achievement of world peace which they consider essential if humanity is not to be destroyed through the use of nuclear weapons. They advocate "disarmament" and "open diplomacy". These conditions for world peace were enunciated during the First World War by Woodrow Wilson. Today they are advocated by the United Nations Organization. Let us see what disarmament means. It means non-violence in the international field. Nations do not engage in fisticuffs. They no more fight even with bows and arrows or swords. What does open diplomacy mean? It means the elimination of international espionage which hampers today even the movements of innocent people in foreign lands. However peaceful a man's mission may be, if he travels outside his country, he is suspect and his movements are constantly watched by the authorities. Open diplomacy would mean employment of truth in international

diplomacy; however, when politicians talk of "disarmament and open diplomacy", they do not mean what they say. Rather they act contrary to their professions. They increase armaments and make them more and more destructive. They have also discovered new ways of espionage which cannot be easily detected. Gandhiji meant what he said and put his ideas into practice. If then violence, war and crooked diplomacy are to be avoided, Gandhiji's way seems to be the only way.

No people can indefinitely bear injustice and tyranny. The unchecked violence of tyrants degrades human beings. It is not only materially injurious but it brings about the moral degradation of man. It affects his very soul. Freedom also is the basic condition of all progress in the world. Pioneers in every field of human advance have always worked for freedom of belief, expression, movement, etc. If nations do not adopt Gandhiji's method of non-violence to remove injustice or resolve international disputes, there is no escape from hate, violence and war. There is also no escape from the weapons of war becoming ever sharper and ever more destructive. Today we have reached a stage where their use will not only destroy civilisation of every variety but may also destroy the human race itself.

In nuclear warfare, there are likely to be no victors and no vanquished. Even if nuclear war-heads go off by accident, there would be danger to the world. Therefore, under present circumstances when humanity stands on the brink of annihilation, Gandhiji's method of settling international problems and disputes through non-violence cannot be considered impractical.

It is true that the nations of the world have seen the danger of war. At the present stage of human evolution they have, therefore, devised organisational methods to keep the peace of the world. After World War I there was the League of Nations but it could not prevent World War II. This was because it was infested with the power politics of the big nations. It was thought that the League of Nations had not the requisite authority to stop war. After World War II, the politicians of the big victorious countries have established the United Nations Organization. But this too is working under great strain of power politics of the big and the militarily strong nations. The fact is that the elimination of war and violence is

not merely a question of external organisation, but more important is a psychological and moral problem. Unless the hearts of men are converted and their beliefs changed, no organisation can succeed in bringing about peace in the world. As in the religious field, so also in the political and international field, unless there is a rebirth and our fundamental values change, no external organisation for peace can succeed.

Gandhiji was not merely satisfied with elaborating a non-violent method for the settlement of political and international conflicts and redressing wrongs, but he also showed the way by which a conflict could be minimised, if not altogether eliminated. His scheme of constructive work with its moral basis minimised points of conflict. These schemes, as they try to eliminate exploitation of man by man, also help the democratic way of life. Take, for instance, his scheme of decentralised industry. It minimises conflict in the economic field.

By moralising politics through the three principles of truth, non-violence and purity of means and fighting injustice and tyranny through satyagraha and by his constructive programme, Gandhiji sought to co-ordinate and synthesise social, political and economic life, establish effective democracy and lay the foundations of a new social order based on justice and equality and pave the way for world peace.

Whence did Gandhiji get his idea of satyagraha? This question has been debated often. Some Western thinkers believe that he got the idea from the New Testament, specially from the Sermon on the Mount. It is true that Gandhiji was greatly impressed by the Sermon. But he found that it only confirmed his own Vaishnavite faith. The song of Narasimha Mehta, 'Vaishnava Jana To Tene Kahiye' ('He is a Vaishnava who feels other's sufferings as his own') was his favourite and was often sung at his prayer-meetings. It enunciates the same moral principles as are laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. But Christ held that his kingdom was not of this but of the other world. His teachings were meant to guide individuals to the path of salvation. He did not concern himself with political, economic or social problems. Gandhiji's whole life, on the other hand, was devoted to the solution of political, economic and social problems. He said that he

was a politician trying to be a saint. He also said that all that concerns life must be the concern of the searcher after truth, God. He did aspire to see, as he said, God face to face. But that, he believed, could be done through the service of man.

Some thinkers also believe that Gandhiji's idea of satyagraha was derived from the writings of Tolstoy. Tolstoy's ideas about truth and non-violence were derived from the New Testament. He too was thinking in terms of the individual. He writes: ". . . . it is sufficient to believe that truth is not what men talk of, but what is told by his own conscience, that is, by God—and at once the whole artificially maintained public opinion will disappear. . . ."* Again he writes: ". . . . the Christian doctrine, in its true sense, never proposed to abolish anything, nor to change any human organization. The very thing which distinguishes Christian religion from all other religions and social doctrines is that it gives men the possibilities of a real and good life, not by means of general laws regulating the lives of all men, but by enlightening each individual man with regard to the sense of his own life, by showing him wherein consists the evil and the real good of his life. . . . The question for a Christian does not lie in this: whether or not a man has the right to destroy the existing order of things, and to establish another in its stead, or to decide which kind of government will be the best. . . .but the question, the decision of which is not optional, but unavoidable . . . .is How am I to act in the dilemma which is constantly before me? Shall I form part of a government which recognizes the right to own landed property by men who never work on it, which levies taxes on the poor in order to give them to the rich, which condemns erring men to gallows and death, which sends out soldiers to commit murder, which depraves whole races of men by means of opium and brandy, etc., or shall I refuse to take a share in a government, the doings of which are contrary to my conscience? But what will come of it, what sort of State will there be, if I act in this way, is a thing I do not know and which I shall not say I do not wish to know, but which I cannot know."** This shows that Tolstoy, like Christ, was not thinking in terms of changing an iniquitous social order but of the individual.

*Tolstoy : *On Civil Disobedience and Non-violence*, p. 93.
**Ibid, pp. 136-38.

For instance, Tolstoy never organised resistance based upon truth and non-violence to resist the tyranny of the Czar which was quite a live issue in his day. He wanted only to rouse the conscience of the individual against evil.

Strangely enough, some sections of orthodox Hindus agree in this respect with the Western thinkers. They also believe that the idea of non-violence to solve political problems has no authority in Hindu religion. They base their argument upon the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Gita*. I am afraid in this they are doing injustice to their religion with its many facets. The Vaishnavites, the Jains and the Buddhists believe that ahimsa, non-violence, is the highest virtue, *ahimsa paramo dharmah*. Gandhiji had his own way of interpreting the *Gita*. He did not consider it as a book on politics or political and military strategy but a religious scripture. It showed the way to self-realisation through right action done as one's *dharma*, duty, without attachment to its fruit, favourable or otherwise. He has written a commentary on the *Gita*. But whether the Hindu scriptures sanction violence in asserting one's legitimate rights or not, may be a question under dispute but it is a fact that they lay emphasis upon ahimsa, non-violence, as a great virtue. In the *Gita* it is so mentioned. However, there can be no doubt that Gandhiji derived the basic idea of satyagraha (that of ahimsa) from his own scriptures and from the environment of his Vaishnavite home. We have noted how his mother would consent to his going to England only when he took three vows and one of them was that he would not eat meat there.

But all this is beside the point. We have seen how Gandhiji conceived the idea of satyagraha in South Africa. He thought of it as a practical way of defending the diminishing rights of his countrymen settled there against those who wanted South Africa to remain a white colony. It is also there that he perfected the technique of satyagraha. Its essentials were worked out in South Africa. But Gandhiji has never claimed originality for himself. This may be due to his modesty or the desire of Indian thinkers to trace every new idea to their old wisdom. They consider themselves merely as commentators. So far as Hindus who consider that Gandhiji had derived his idea of satyagraha from the Bible or the West are concerned, the evidence of our great scholar and patriot Tilak, who

has written a learned commentary on the *Gita*, should be conclusive. He says: "There are always penalties prescribed for the breach of every law....But when a law itself is immoral and is sought to be enforced by the Governmental authority, it becomes necessary to test our faith in truth, justice and dharma and defy the immoral law....But faith and devotion to truth and justice have got to be of such a high degree or fervour that no other consideration but performance of duty must enter the mind of the devotee and the faithful. Doing duty in spite of everything is the only sentiment that must take his complete possession.... This virtue is not attainable by learning and scholarship....This is spiritual power. This is the teaching of the *Upanishads*. Although this spiritual power cannot be attained by learning or the intellect, a determined man can attain it by practice of penance according to the *Gita*."*

*Preface to Avantikabai Gokhale's biography of Gandhiji in Marathi published in 1918.

# 41

# Political Thought

In no department of life has the contribution of Gandhiji been so unique and significant as in the political field, national and international. At no time throughout history, as we know it, have fundamental moral values, such as truth, justice, brotherhood of man and non-violence, been applied or even recognised as valid in men's relations in the political field and more especially in the mutual dealings of organised groups and nations. It is true that moral values are often violated in all spheres of life, especially in the field of commerce and industry. Yet even here the validity of these values has never been questioned. Often businessmen are reminded of their duty to be fair and honest. In highly organised communities, businessmen themselves have devised desirable norms of conduct, which would be fair to the producers and the consumers of goods. Even in societies where no such code of conduct exists, honesty is considered as the best policy. It is not unoften that an honest businessman does as well as, if sometimes not better than, one who uses doubtful methods. Further, businessmen keep their word with one another and fulfil their obligations. Whatever be the actual conduct of businessmen, the validity of the moral law is never questioned. Unfair conduct, even when tolerated, is not applauded.

Reverse is the case in the political field. The very recognition of the validity of the moral law is denied in political dealings. To some extent the validity of the moral values is recognised in a

democracy. The more genuine a democracy is, the better is the standard of conduct observed in it. As a matter of fact, democracy is based upon the recognition of the dignity of man which functions, not by breaking heads but by counting them, not by the bullet but by the ballot-box. It can be real only when the voter is free from any coercion, exercised by power, social, economic or political. This means that democracy, for its healthy and proper functioning, needs non-violence in the field of internal politics. It is also defeated when there is widespread impersonation, that is, when there is deviation from the standards of honesty, which is truth.

It is, however, a fact that even in a democracy the non-observance of the moral law is not condemned as much as in other social relations. Democracy is often defeated by the manipulation of votes and such other practices as cannot bear the light of the moral law. We are familiar with what in America are called Tammany Hall methods. These are practised not only in America but more or less in other democracies as well.

Further, no elective democracy has yet been able to function without the party system. This often undermines the politician's loyalty, not only to the moral law, but also to the nation, for whose good he has been elected to the legislature. It is a fact that in a representative democracy, as it has developed, a person unattached to a party would find it difficult to win an election, and when elected he would find it even more difficult to make his weight felt in the legislature. If he wants to mould the policies of the nation, he must fall in line with the bosses in the party. He must follow the line laid down by them. In this he may have to modify his opinions and sometimes even to suppress them. He may have to give his loyalty to the party and not to the nation for the service of which he is elected to the legislature. It is natural and even legitimate for a politician to aspire to wield power. Nothing worthwhile can be done without power. Yet it is a fact that power corrupts. Even a politician in opposition aspires for power. He may have, therefore, to exaggerate the faults of those in power and highlight them before the public. Politicians have often to appear before the public as what they in reality are not. They have also to make the wrong appear like the right reason. An English author who has studied the subject of power politics writes that in the case of sixteen Prime Ministers of

England, he found that "cunning, ruthlessness and mendacity were among the qualities of those who travelled the path to power". He further writes that in his opinion "it would be agreeable if it could be established that the simple virtues of truth, sincerity, fair-dealing, inflexible rectitude helped all men to reach the top; in actual fact, however, few of them embodied these qualities. Ramsay MacDonald, when hard pressed, was notoriously prone to seek refuge in prevarication. Those dealing with Lloyd George found he was a man who could never look on a belt without wishing to hit below it. High-minded men have sometimes reached positions of supreme power on the strength of their advocacy of a cause. But Prime Ministers have made no fetish of political consistency. To solve their difficulties in team-making, they have been prepared to enlist support without looking too carefully or conscientiously at credentials. They have been ready to accept as colleagues men they have previously denounced. Palmerston, it is said, did not care what dirt he had to eat so long as it was gilded dirt. Gladstone, once the hope of the stern unbending Tories, grew even more radical as the years went by. Churchill deserted the Tories for the other side, and later deserted Liberals to revert to true Blue Tories. Nor is intellectual force a quality indispensable for men in power or men seeking power. The unassuming Attlee outstayed more brilliant minds." This only means that politicians, especially the successful ones, do not live up to the moral values which they profess and preach and which are necessary for the healthy functioning of a democracy. Further, democracy is rule by the majority. It sometimes is weighed down by mob passions and prejudices. These can often be more cruel than those of any dictatorial government. Genuine democracy must not only safeguard the rights of the individual citizen but those of minorities also.

Notwithstanding its moral lapses, democracy is the least undesirable form of government. Its lapses are due to the desire to wield power. But these lapses, as in other fields of human endeavour, are not incurable. It is possible to avoid them, if not altogether eliminate them. This can be done by the electorate, if it is intellectually and morally vigilant. Under one-party rule or dictatorship, the very pretence of morality is given up. These forms of government consider certain ends as supreme. Whatever the

means, the ends justify them. For instance, race purity was considered by the Nazis as the most desirable end for Germany. For this they violated all moral values. They repudiated them even in theory. The aim was the elimination of the Jewish race. A devastating world war was justified to prove the superiority of the German race. Mass murders and death chambers were justified. The same was the case with Fascism. What was done in the name of race purity in Germany was done in the name of the Italian nation. For establishing a classless society, a desirable end, rivers of blood have flowed in Russia and China and in those countries in East Europe given over to Russia. In the case of China the innocent people of Tibet had to suffer race martyrdom.

How was then the Government of India to be organised after independence? Of course it was to be organised as a democracy. But after what pattern? It must follow the genius of the people and their historical evolution. It must be based upon institutions familiar to the people.

India through the ages has lived and even now lives in the villages. Each village community was in the past organised as a semi-independent republic, governed by its panchayats, consisting generally of the heads of families. In some places the panchayats were elected, the electors being the heads of families. These village communities were in most cases economically self-sufficient, producing the essential necessities of everyday life. Their surplus products went to the cities and to foreign markets.

Gandhiji wanted the government of free India to rest on the foundation of the revived and revitalized village panchayats. The panchayats were not to be organised by the Central and State Governments. The State and the Central governments were to be based on the village units and not *vice versa.* Gandhiji held that as the economic structure of India should be based upon decentralised industry, so must its political organisation rest on the devolution of power. He further held that democracy could be most effective in small units, where people could carry on a dialogue and confront one another. He had a holy fear of concentration of power. It must be diffused through many centres. He held that that government is the best which governs least. He did not believe in making people happy through coercion. They must make

themselves happy according to their own ideas, provided they are not anti-social. Gandhiji further held that the strength of the centre must rest on the strength of its foundations in the villages and not at their expense. This naturally meant indirect elections to the legislative assemblies.

Gandhiji, however, did not work out the details of his conception of a democratic government for independent India. The present Constitution of India does not embody his ideas. It is based on a strong centre, monopolising most of the sources of power and finance, leaving the local units weak and resourceless.

To the extent that we have made the centre in Delhi powerful at the expense of the local units, our democracy has suffered. Some of our present difficulties stem from the lack of opportunities for the exercise of initiative by the local units.

In the international field, Gandhiji was the greatest advocate of world peace in modern times. He held that injustice and tyranny exercised by one nation over another were intolerable and must be resisted, since individuals, as also groups, could not remain for long under such conditions without revolt. Gandhiji, as we have already stated, wanted this revolt to be open and peaceful. Also humanity has now in this nuclear age no other way left. It must, however, be remembered that this fundamental reform in the international field, as in every other sphere of life, would need "the martyrdom of man". After all, even the violent soldier has to be prepared to sacrifice his life for the cause for which he has taken up arms. Only he would like to kill before losing his life. Whenever overwhelmed by odds, where there was no possibility of injuring the enemy, he would rather undergo martyrdom than yield to the forces he would consider unjust and evil. Groups have done so in history, only their martyrdom is forced upon them by adverse circumstances. A satyagrahi has to face voluntary martyrdom, when all other forms of non-violent resistance have failed. In Gandhiji's scheme of world peace, not only individuals but also groups and nations will have to be prepared for martyrdom, if need be. The martyr may appear to be defeated but he conquers in death. Moral conduct does not pay high dividends. Everybody may not have to make the supreme sacrifice of life; but one has to suffer every day for the faith

that is in one, unless one is fortunate. Even then one must be prepared to pay the highest price.

Gandhiji does not believe that world peace can be achieved through a policy of balance of power or through the fear of utter destruction induced by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. He does believe purely in a world organisation keeping international peace. But a world organisation for peace must consist of nations whose politicians are genuinely anxious for peace and do not aspire to dominate other nations. World organisations will be effective only when there is a change of heart in big and powerful nations and their politicians.

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# Economic Thought

MODERN economic thought took shape in the West after the Industrial Revolution in the latter part of the 18th century. In understanding Gandhiji's economic ideas, one must rid oneself of, or at least modify, one's ideas derived from the economic thought of the West.

Gandhiji's economics has to be studied from the viewpoint of his own moral and spiritual principles and ideals as also from the conditions that existed and still exist in India. One must also try to understand the language that Gandhiji uses. It is not the language used by the specialists. It is the language of the market-place which the common man understands.

In the earlier chapters we have described the spiritual and moral ideas of Gandhiji. We have also said that he viewed life as a whole and not as divided into separate watertight compartments. All the facets of man's life can be unified, if one set of moral values is applied to them all. If the same moral rules are not applied to all human activities, the result will be conflict within the individual and in society. This will lead to a split personality both in the individual and the group. Nor can all truths be stated as flowing from one supreme cause. Such a view, as the *Gita* says, will be a *tamasika*, a deluded approach to any problem. Also, if truth in any sphere of life is viewed in isolation, it will lead to intolerance and fanaticism. Take, for instance, the Marxist idea that the whole of human history is a record of the conflict and war between economic classes.

This is a partial view. Man has many urges. The economic urge is one, however basic it may be. It is true that an individual's life would be bleak indeed if he lacked the minimum requirements of a cultured life. But if economic competence is necessary for the happiness and progress of an individual and a group, freedom too is as necessary and so are moral and spiritual values. Christ truly said, "Man does not live by bread alone." But it is also a fact that he cannot live without it either. Matter may be less important than the spirit; but in human beings the spirit manifests itself and works through the flesh. Also, freedom is the very essence of our being. It is a primary condition for the progress of the individual, the group or the nation. Therefore, Marx's conception of economic activity and modes of production as deciding factors in the life of the individual and the group is only a partial truth. That economic activity cannot dispense with moral values is also a fact of life. This will be clear from the following true story.

A young lady went to a fashionable shop. She purchased a piece of cloth. The price demanded was four times what would have been reasonable. The lady paid the price and went away. The merchant afterwards discovered that she had left her purse behind. The purse contained jewellery worth a few thousands. The merchant was very much disturbed. He did not know her address. What was he to do with the purse? After a few days of enquiry he found out the address of the lady and took the purse to her. The lady smiled and said: "You charged me four times the value of the cloth. The excess price could only be rupees 20 or 25; and now you have restored to me my purse which contains jewellery worth a few thousands. How is that?" The merchant too smiled and said : "Madam, the price that I charged you was according to my commercial morality, the restoration of your purse is my individual morality. I am not a thief!"

Such incongruities are found in our everyday life. But old habits, traditions and conventions have not only dulled our moral sensitivity but also our intellectual honesty. In Gandhiji's philosophy of life there is no place for economic classes as held by Marx or of an economic man as held by classical economists. These are mere abstractions.

The economic activity of man is concerned with the production

of material goods, their exchange, distribution and consumption. These activities are necessary not only for the existence of man but also for his happiness and progress. Man lives in society and all these activities concern not only the individual in isolation but they create social relations. As a matter of fact, if we think of it, all wealth is socially produced. That is Gandhiji's view. No Robinson Crusoe on a solitary island, be he a capitalist or a labourer, can produce wealth. Gandhiji, therefore, held that socially produced wealth must be equally divided among all those who are instrumental in producing it. If this is too idealistic a view, socially produced wealth must be equitably divided. He says: "According to me the economic constitution of India, and for that matter of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of the elementary necessaries of life remain in the control of the masses. They should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be....Their monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too."

From the above conception is derived Gandhiji's idea of limitation of human wants within certain limits. Some amount of material goods is necessary for the good life, as the Greek philosophers called it. The possession of material goods beyond that, instead of working for the freedom and the happiness of the individual, works for his enslavement and, often, for his unhappiness. It is, therefore, necessary that one should limit one's wants and not increase them indefinitely. About this multiplication of wants as a mark of progress, Gandhiji's reply to a questioner was: "If by advance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated I should be satisfied. But I would not like to pack more stuffs into my belly than I can digest and more things than I can usefully use." While discussing the possibility of world peace, Gandhiji said: "This again seems impossible without great nations ceasing to

believe in soul-destroying competition and to multiply wants and increasing their material possessions." Once he said that his attempt was to see beauty in voluntary simplicity, poverty and slowness.... "Multiplicity of wants has no fascination for me. They deaden the inner life in us," he added. Again he says: "A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of a help. Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must come, at a certain point, to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness." Further, he says: "In so far as we have made the modern material craze our goal, so far are we going downhill on the path of progress. That you cannot serve God and mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice....I have heard many of our countrymen saying that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to submit that such an attempt, if made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be wise, temperate and furious in a moment."

If Gandhiji was against the artificial multiplication of wants, he was also against the enforced grinding poverty of the masses in India and elsewhere. It was not only materially harmful but was also morally degrading. About this he says: "No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has the right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But for this simple performance we need no assistance from economists or their laws." Gandhiji also held : " ...Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world....But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving."

Apart from opposing the poverty imposed upon the masses of India by imperialist rule, Gandhiji was against the exploitation of the poor by the capitalists, foreign or Indian. It is well known that in Ahmedabad he supported the strike of the textile labourers against the millowners. It was also against the exploitation of the kisans by

the government, the planters and the zamindars that he started his campaigns in Champaran and in Gujarat. Believing as he did in non-violence, he was of course against the physical liquidation of the capitalists and the zamindars. Yet their exploitation had to end. This he believed could be done if the landlords and the capitalists acted as trustees of the poor. His doctrine of trusteeship has to be properly understood. It works in all spheres of life. The parents act as trustees for the children. The Government acts or should act as a trustee of the people. The representatives of the people in a democracy are the trustees of those who have chosen them as members of a legislature. Even in a dictatorship, the dictator justifies his arbitrary power on the ground that he is the trustee of the people. The Communist Party considers itself as the guardian of the interests of the proletariat. It further believes that it knows their interests better than they themselves do. It, therefore, undertakes to make them happy even against their will. They would even like to oblige the workers in the field and the factory in capitalist countries to be so happy, if they could do it. The trustee, by the very term used, means that he is not the owner. The owner is one whose interest he is called upon to protect. Talking to the textile mill labourers in Ahmedabad, Gandhiji told them that they were the real masters of the mills. Their labour was more precious than the wealth of the capitalists. But what if the trustee does not act in the interest of the real owner? In civil life the ward has the remedy if the trustee violates his trust. Reference can be made to a court of law. If it is found that the trustee has not acted in the interest of the real owner, the court dismisses him and appoints another trustee. In the case of peasants and labourers this may not be possible unless the Government is so constituted that it works for the good of the common man. Gandhiji, therefore, advised the labourers and the kisans to offer satyagraha to assert their rights.

These are some of the basic ideas of Gandhiji in the economic field. Consistent with these ideas, he wanted to solve the twin problems of poverty and unemployment of the masses. To those who criticised him for concerning himself with mundane affairs, his reply was that he could carry God to the poor only in a bowl of rice. At the Second Round Table Conference he said that the only justification for the existence of the Indian National Congress

was that it served the interest of the masses and every interest, foreign or indigenous, "must subside" before their interest.

Economic formulations or laws as they are called are by their nature largely abstractions. They are not laws as conceived in physical sciences which deal with inanimate matter. It has no intelligence or emotion. For example, one piece of iron does not differ from another. Place and climate and other factors do not change its basic qualitative nature. It has no intelligence, emotion or will. But economics deals with living human beings who have intelligence and will of their own and are subject to emotion and passion. Organised groups and nations have also the characteristics of human beings of which they are composed. It is true that men and women have many similar characteristics, yet each human being is unique. So are groups and nations different from one another. Also, the world today is organised in various groups occupying different regions of the globe. Each region generally differs from the other in its soil, climate, rainfall, water resources on the surface and underground. It also differs in the fertility of its soil and its underground wealth. Then some countries may be islands surrounded by sea, others may have easy access to the sea and still others may be land-locked. Sometimes even the territory occupied by one organised group is divided into regions which differ from one another. Also, culturally different groups have developed differently. The economic pattern that may suit one country or nation may not necessarily suit another. For instance, the economic organisation of the Arctic regions like Greenland and Alaska may not suit the people living in sub-tropical or tropical regions. Again, the economic organisation that would suit an arid region of the globe may have to be different from that of a fertile region.

It is true that through the application of science and technology various deficiencies of a region may be minimised. Even then there will be certain deficiencies which cannot be altered by advancing science and technology. For instance, science and technology, howsoever advanced, may not be able to cure the deficiency from which a country like Japan suffers for want of coal, iron and oil. Even if there is One World governed by a single authority various

regions will have different economic arrangements suited to their geographical and other conditions.

Whatever be the formulations of the laws of economic science, they will have to be at least modified, if not changed in their application to suit the different regions of the globe and their people.

Gandhiji's economic ideas can, therefore, be best understood in the light of the physical and social conditions. Throughout the ages India was known for its riches. It was known as "Golden Ind". The source of its riches was not agriculture; in those days its produce could not be exported. Its wealth was derived from its industry, carried on in almost every home and village. The product of this industry found a ready market throughout the then known world. It was the lucrative trade with India which induced the seamen of the maritime countries of Europe to find a sea-route to it, as the land route was blocked against them by the Turkish empire. It was in the search of a sea-route to India that Columbus discovered America. The sea-route to India was discovered some years after by a Portuguese sailor, Vasco da Gama, *via* the Cape of Good Hope. The trade with India was at first the monopoly of the Portuguese merchants. But soon other nations in Europe participated in it. Ultimately the British succeeded in eliminating their other European rivals. They also succeeded in creating for themselves a vast empire.

As is known, the Indian trade was carried on by the East India Company, chartered by the King of England. As its ships could carry nothing which India needed, it was specially allowed to take out of England bullion worth £ 75,000 annually by a special act of the British Parliament. It, however, found that the ships going to India could not sail without some ballast. The Company, therefore, filled its ships with salt. To realise at least the freight charges, this salt must find a market in India. To that end the Company's government imposed an excise duty on salt manufactured in India. Thus was destroyed the flourishing salt industry here. It was, therefore, no wonder that Gandhiji called this the most oppressive tax and when he started the 1930 satyagraha it was against the salt laws.

In England the Industrial Revolution began in the latter part of the 18th century. This was made possible not only by the

invention of steam power applied to industry, but by the fact that England through its political power had been progressively destroying Indian industries in favour of its own manufacturers. All the raw material was taken from India and products finished in England were shipped to India and found a ready market here.

One by one our industries were destroyed by the political power that England had acquired here. It is held that our industries were destroyed because England used steam power. This is not altogether true. If England had not destroyed our industries and created a vast market for its own goods, even the application of steam power would not have enabled it to build an economic empire. Steam power only extended the scope of this empire.

Deprived of their industry, progressively more and more of the growing population of India had to rely for all its requirements on their income from land. Nearly 75 per cent of them were engaged in agriculture. The size of the farm holdings went on diminishing, till most of them became uneconomic. The question before Gandhiji was how to find useful and remunerative work for this vast rural population. The agriculturist in India was without work for at least three months in the year. The landless labourers whose number was ever on the increase could find work only in the sowing and reaping seasons. This unemployment and under-employment was the cause of Indian poverty, with all its attendant ills—low vitality, shortened span of life, ignorance, squalor and disease. It was this grinding poverty of our masses which first drew the attention of our reformers and public men. Several books were written about it and its causes. The most noted of these was R. C. Dutt's book *Economic History of India* (2 volumes), of which Gandhiji records in his *Hind Swaraj*, that when he read it he was so powerfully affected that he began to shed tears.

After the organisation of the Indian National Congress, its annual sessions were invariably followed by industrial conferences. Every reformer, social, economic or political, held that if poverty was to be abolished from India it could only be done through the revival of its industry. Having no Government of their own, they preached the *dharma*, the duty, of swadeshi. The Bengal agitation against the Partition put more life into this movement.

Gandhiji had to take into consideration all these factors to devise a method by which the grinding poverty of the Indian masses could be mitigated, if not altogether removed. The only way was to revive the Swadeshi movement. The new movement had not only to solve the problem of consumption but also that of production. After all, it is production which would increase the quantum of employment. The object of the movement during the time of the Partition agitation was defeated by the Indian millowners. As the demand increased, they increased the price of cloth, and even passed off foreign cloth as made in India. In this respect Gandhiji was put right by a patriotic millowner in Bombay, who told him, "You are aware that in the days of partition (of Bengal), the millowners fully exploited the swadeshi movement. When it was at its height, they raised the price of cloth and did even worse things. We are not conducting our business out of philanthropy. We do it for profit."

The chief article that the villager needed was cloth. Its import at the time, from England, drained more of our wealth than any other single article. As a matter of fact, most of the prosperity of England was due to its textile industry. Therefore, Gandhiji took up the production of cloth as the first industry to be tackled. In the beginning he thought only in terms of weaving. He had put up some looms in his Ashram at Sabarmati. But the yarn used was produced in Indian mills. Soon he found that if a subsidiary industry which the villager could take to was to be found without disturbing his agricultural occupation, it must be yarn production at home. No particular technical skill was required to ply the *charkha*. Before the introduction of power mills, every home in India produced its own yarn to make cloth, even as in Europe before the use of mechanical power every household had to produce woollen yarn for the cloth it needed.

There was much misunderstanding about the role of hand-spinning in the khadi industry. It persists even today. Gandhiji had often to explain the position. He said, "Nobody has ever suggested that spinning can be a means of livelihood, except to the very poor. It is intended to restore spinning to its ancient position as a universal industry, auxiliary to agriculture, resorted to by the agriculturist during those months, when agricultural operations are

suspended as a matter of course...." Again he says, "Nobody has suggested that spinning should replace any wage-earning occupation. It has always been regarded as a subsidiary industry." In course of time, under Gandhiji, the programme of the revival of other cottage and village industries, which catered to the everyday need of the villager, was taken in hand. The All-India Village Industries Board was formed for the purpose. What Gandhiji wanted to accomplish through the revival of cottage and village industries was to utilise the waste of the nation. After all, there were many millions living in our villages who were being physically maintained at however low a level of subsistence. If they did some productive work which would be useful to them or which could be put in the market, it would be so much wealth added to the individual and the nation. One fails to understand what laws of economics are violated when waste is turned into wealth, however small it may be.

Gandhiji had often been criticised by many intellectuals in India for his effort to revive cottage and village industries in modern times. It was said that he was putting back the clock of progress. It is not true that the ignorant suffer from rigidity of thought and outlook. The educated and the learned are often conservative and even superstitious. It is possible to convince the ignorant by rational argument; but the educated bring what appears to them learned arguments in support of their conventional thinking. As we have said, the thought of the educated Indians, even economists, follows the pattern of the West. They have learnt through their text-books that there can be only one type of industrial revolution, through mechanised and centralised big industry, which alone can bring prosperity and affluence. It can only be done through what is called "the Industrial Revolution". It can be done in no other way.

It is not my purpose here to describe in detail the conditions which made the Industrial Revolution possible in the West. I shall confine myself to a few main causes. Western countries had a small population. Also, they had created a vast market for their goods in colonial countries, which they had conquered either through war or through chicanery and fraud. From their colonies they could import cheap food and raw materials. Conditions in

India were quite different. Its industries had been destroyed, as has already been stated. This population, 75 per cent of which, as we have said, was engaged in agriculture and other like occupations, could not be shifted to big cities to find gainful employment in huge mechanised industrial establishments. India could not even command the requisite capital to put up the necessary plants. Machines are used to economise human labour. The problem in India is not to economise it but to utilise it properly and profitably. Periodically, through the advance of science and technology, new and more powerful machines are invented and used by big business. Every newly invented machine is designed to reduce the quantum of labour. Labour is further reduced through rationalisation of organisational methods. All this progressively reduces employment. Sometimes 50 per cent of the labour force is thus thrown out of work. When this rationalisation has economised labour to the last degree, further reduction is brought about through what is called automation. This means that only about 10 per cent of human labour is required to do the same amount of work. In automation a few skilled workers are required to press some buttons to enable the machines to carry out all the processes of production including packing. Automation also needs cheap and plentiful raw materials. These the industrialised countries have so far been getting from their colonies and through the manipulation of their trade and tariff. However, today with all their huge industrial production they are facing recession. This is because automation, while producing a plethora of goods, does not increase labour and the purchasing power of the masses. The loans that developed countries have in recent years been giving to under-developed countries are for the purchase of goods produced in their countries. Would India be able to compete in this labour-saving and costly race of industrialisation? It is well known that Indian labour resists all schemes of rationalisation and automation. Such industrialisation will rather increase unemployment and poverty and worsen the condition of our masses. Gandhiji says: "Whatever the mechanical age may do, it will never give employment to the millions whom the wholesale introduction of power machinery now displaces." Again he says: "A starving man or woman who has the time hanging on his or her hands will be glad to earn

an honest anna during that time." The pity is even an additional anna makes the difference in the condition of the poor in India.

These considerations weighed with Gandhiji when he advocated and worked for the revival of cottage and village industries. It must, however, be remembered that he wanted the everyday requirements, as in olden days, to be provided by decentralised industry.

It has been argued that Gandhiji was against the development of science. This is absurd. The essence of science is the acquisition of knowledge through experience, observation and experiment. Throughout his life Gandhiji had been making experiments in the social field. He has called his autobiography "My Experiments with Truth". After all, sciences whether physical or social are connected with the experimental matter. Gandhiji offered on behalf of the Spinners' Association a prize of a lakh of rupees for the invention of a *charkha* which could be produced and repaired in the villages and would yield four times the yarn spun on the conventional *charkha*.

It is also wrong to believe that Gandhiji was against technology. He had no objection to the use of mechanised power to increase production and diminish the drudgery of workers. The only condition was that such mechanical power must be available to every villager who wanted to use it. But he did not want science and machinery to produce goods and starve men. For him the supreme consideration was man. When Gandhiji was asked, "Are you against large-scale production?" he replied: "I never said that. The belief is one of the many superstitions about me....Your question is based upon loose newspaper reports. What I am against is large-scale production of things villagers can produce without difficulty." Again, to a question about his being against machinery, he says: "How can I when I know that even this body is the most delicate machine?... What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is... for 'labour-saving' machinery. Men go on saving labour till thousands are without work and thrown on open streets to die of starvation." Again he says : "The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not make atrophied the limbs of man." Gandhiji was not against all mechanised big industry. He says: "I do visualise electricity, ship-building, iron-works, machine-

making and the like existing side by side with village crafts. But the order of precedence will be reversed. Hitherto industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the villages and the village handicrafts. In the state of future it will subserve the villages and their crafts. I do not believe in the socialist belief that the centralisation of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare, when centralised industries are planned and owned by the State."

After all, science and technology are powers. They can be used as every other power for good or for evil. One has painfully to admit that so far science and technology as applied in the industrial field have led to the capitalist order of society with its exploitation of labour at home and abroad and to imperialism and war. Under dictatorial regimes science and technology have made for the suppression of the basic rights of men and brought about their degradation. In war, science and technology have invented instruments which would spell the destruction of any type of civilisation that has been evolved anywhere in the world and may be even the whole of humanity. Gandhiji wanted the power made available through science and technology to be applied for purposes that would bring about greater production carried on in peace and harmony.

We have said that Gandhiji had no objection to the use of power such as electricity for cottage and village industries to increase production and, wherever necessary, to take away the drudgery of physical labour, provided it could be supplied to village homes at rates the villager could afford. He only did not want the worker to be separated from his village home and work under factory conditions in congested urban areas. He wanted every home to be a factory. In electricity we have power which can be carried to long distances and distributed in small units. With its help, the villager can produce articles for his own use and, if need be, for the market. Moreover, today all machinery consists of standardised parts. These can be made in village homes on small machines worked by electricity and then assembled in a big factory. Even as it is, the different parts of big machines are made in different sections of a factory. These parts are then assembled to turn out a big machine. If instead of the parts being manufactured within the premises of a factory, they are produced in village homes, nothing will be lost. These parts can then be assembled in a factory.

This is generally done in Japan. There the big factory owners, instead of enlarging their own plant, provide some capital and the know-how to the workers in smaller units. They produce parts of machines and these are assembled in big factories. Thus industry is decentralised and one big factory becomes the nucleus of a number of ancillary units. Something of this sort is being done in the Punjab. Such an arrangement will also greatly reduce the loss to production due to periodical suspension of work by strikes and lock-outs. Though we are using electricity every day, our thought pattern follows the steam age. Steam, unlike electricity, cannot be divided and carried to long distances; hence the need of centralised production in mills and factories.

It is not my purpose here to dilate upon the social and moral aspects of decentralised industry, more especially of cottage and village industries. The artisan in the latter, like a labourer in a mill or factory, does not produce a tiny part of an article of utility. He produces a complete thing which he knows will be useful to his customers. He knows that he is fulfilling a social purpose which will benefit him and his neighbour. Further, the artisan is not obliged to breathe the foul air of the factory nor has he to live in slums. He works in his cottage which usually he owns. He lives in his village where he has neighbours whom his family has known for generations. He is surrounded by the members of his family who often co-operate in his work. He enjoys Nature's pure air and God's sunshine. His work is creative. It is often artistic. He can take it or leave it as he likes. He is neither the employee of a capitalist nor of a capitalist government. He is a free man. Compared to him the factory labourer is hardly an individual. He is only a unit in the proletariat. He works in a noisy and crowded place breathing the air polluted by many people working together under one roof. If he does not live in slums he lives generally in ugly and unhygienic surroundings. Even though the factory conforms to the rules and regulations laid down by a modern government, it cannot be as healthy as a village home. In a big city, the worker is subject to many temptations, while the village artisan is comparatively free from them. Even from the point of view of democracy, an artisan will make a better citizen than a factory worker. He is less amenable to mass suggestion.

For all these and other material, psychological, aesthetic and moral reasons, reformers and philosophers in the West have, in recent years, been thinking in terms of decentralisation of industry. The great mathematician-philosopher, Bertrand Russell, in his book, *Authority and the Individual,* deploring the decline of the Scottish hand-woven tweed industry, writes: "First, there is the loss of one more local and traditional skill which has brought to those who exercise it the joy of craftsmanship and the way of life which, though hard, gives pride and self-respect and the joy of achievement, through ingenuity and effort, in circumstances of difficulty and risk. Secondly, there is diminution in the intrinsic excellence of the product, both aesthetic and utilitarian. Thirdly, the murder of a local industry aggravates the tendency to uncontrollable growth of cities.... The independent weavers become a unit in vast, hideous and unhealthy human ant-hill. Their economic security is no longer dependent on their own skill and upon the forces of nature; it is lost in the few large organisations in which if one fails, all fail...." Bertrand Russell adds: "In those parts of the world in which industrialism is still young, the possibility of avoiding the horrors we have experienced still exists. India, for example, is traditionally a land of village communities. It would be a tragedy if this traditional way of life were to be suddenly and violently exchanged for the greater evils of urban industrialism....The rivers of the Himalayas should provide all the hydro-electric power that is needed for the gradual mechanisation of the village industries of India and for immeasurable improvement of physical well-being, without either the obvious disaster of industrial slump or the more subtle loss and degradation which results when age-old traditions are too rudely broken."

I make no apology for quoting this long passage, for only Western thinkers can convince our intellectuals.

Here is what Aldous Huxley says in his book, *Science, Liberty and Peace* : "In applying the results of disinterested scientific research, inventors and technicians have paid more attention to the problem of equipping large concerns with expensive machines of mass production and mass distribution than to that of providing individuals or co-operating groups with cheap and simple but

effective means of production of their sustenance and for the needs of the local market."

The latest advocate of decentralised industry in backward Asian countries is the noted Swedish economist, Dr. Myrdal. In his recent study *Asian Drama* in three volumes, he advocates decentralised industry as best suited for India and other similarly situated countries. He says Indian economy must not follow the Western pattern and should be "job-oriented". He regrets that the "postponement of economic revolution contemplated by Jawaharlal Nehru has become permanent". Then he says that our industrial revolution must not follow the lines taken by the industrial revolution in the West but it must be "job-oriented". This was the very thing that Gandhiji used to talk and which we here have failed to follow.

I have quoted prominent people of the West. They do not stand alone. Many morally and aesthetically sensitive scholars and reformers of the West have expressed similar opinions. They have realised that too much of mechanisation and centralisation of economic activity is inimical to cultural and moral growth. Also, centralisation in the economic field, they feel, is injurious to democracy. Their regret is that, in the society they live in, there is little hope for reversing the process. However, they do not want the newly emancipated and the industrially backward countries to traverse the way they have traversed. In this India has an immense opportunity, which it will be unwise to miss in the name of modernism.

# 43

# Social Reform: Untouchability

GANDHIJI'S contribution in the field of social reform was important for the reconstruction of the life of the nation. In its wide sweep it embraced almost all its aspects. It can be said that the whole of his constructive programme was devoted to social reform. When Gandhiji advised the Congress to accept office in the provinces under the 1935 Act, he told the Congress Ministers, as we have said before, that he expected them to carry forward the constructive programme, as far as it lay with them. Politicians, who did not believe that national independence could be achieved through truthful and non-violent means, considered Gandhiji as merely a social reformer, doing good work, but having no practical conception of politics. Even the Swarajists, who believed that they could non-co-operate from within the Councils, thought, during the interval between the suspension of satyagraha on account of violence at Chauri Chaura and its resumption in 1930, that Gandhiji was merely concerned with social reform and had ceased to take interest in politics. Even the socialists who wore khadi considered Gandhiji for a long time as merely a social reformer.

The constructive programme, as conceived by Gandhiji, was an integral part of our fight for freedom. He did not believe that the imperial ambitions of Britain were alone responsible for our slavery.

It was the neglect of national duty (*dharma*) that was primarily responsible for it. The constructive programme was devised to reform our national character. A reformed India would be a free India.

The first and foremost item of this reform was the removal of untouchability. This reform was not needed only in Hindu society; as we have said, other religious communities were not altogether free from it. But even if the reform was needed by the Hindu community it had its national importance. Untouchability is a cruel and inhuman institution. It violates human dignity. It deadens the sensibility of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Untouchability is against the spirit of democracy which makes no distinction among citizens. It also raises economic problems. The untouchables were the poorest section of Indian society. Their avenues of employment were strictly limited. They lived apart, in unhygienic surroundings, on the outskirts of villages and cities. Though they were Hindus and believed in and worshipped Hindu gods and goddesses, they were not allowed to enter Hindu temples. Public institutions like schools, hotels, hostels, etc., were closed to them. Gandhiji also rightly felt that they who denied justice to those who suffered injustice at their hands had no right to demand justice for themselves from their oppressors.

In tackling the problem of untouchability Gandhiji did not call upon the untouchables to join in the struggle for the assertion of their human rights. They were even incapable then of doing so. They took their lowly position as having been ordained by God. During the campaign against untouchability, we of the so-called higher castes often visited their lowly homes. If we asked for water from them, they would refuse to give it, saying that it would be '*adharma*' for them to offer water to high-caste people. It was such a degradation to which we had reduced a large portion of our population ! Gandhiji, therefore, called upon the caste Hindus to make all the sacrifice necessary for the removal of untouchability. He said that they would thus be rendering only belated justice for the grievous injury inflicted by their ancestors on the untouchables through the centuries. The response of the caste Hindus to the call of Gandhiji in this respect was adequate.

About untouchability Gandhiji said:

"To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of 'untouchables' but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the 'untouchables', not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us, superior Hindus, to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our downtrodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression. Religions like nations are being weighed in the balance. God's grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out from the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence."

Further he says: "Untouchability in its extreme form has always caused me so much pain, because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism. I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practise it today in all those books which we call Hindu Shastras. But as I have repeatedly said in other places, if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself." He adds : "I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence in Hinduism. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day."

He poured out the anguish of his soul when he said : "I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I, therefore, pray that if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra but as an Atishudra." This reminds one of what the Buddha had said: "May I be born again and again till every living creature is saved from pain."

In framing the Congress constitution he made it a condition precedent for anybody joining the national organisation that he

declare himself against untouchability. This was incorporated in the annual pledge that every Congressman had to take.

The equality that Gandhiji claimed for the untouchables in Hindu society included the right to enter Hindu temples. It did not matter to him if these temples were built or endowed by caste Hindus. This insistence of Gandhiji on temple entry was misunderstood by some intellectuals. This was generally due to the influence of Marxist thought, which explains every human activity and institution in economic terms. Such an interpretation is manifestly untenable in the case of untouchability in India, as is the racial and colour prejudice in Western communities, in their homelands and their colonies. In India, the Brahmin may be as poor as the untouchable, but he will not be ill-treated on that account. Untouchability in India, as the race and colour problems in the West, rests upon the idea of the superiority of one section of people over another on account of their birth. The untouchable, in spite of his being treated cruelly by the caste Hindus, yet continues to profess the Hindu religion. He worships the same gods and goddesses. But he is denied access to the Hindu temples. Also, strangely enough, this pernicious system is supposed to be sanctified by Hindu religion. Once the untouchable is allowed entry into Hindu temples, the stigma attached to his community will no more be there, being deprived of its so-called religious sanction. About this Gandhiji says :

> "Temple entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the 'untouchables' and assure them that they are not outcastes before God."
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> "....It is not a question of Harijans asserting their right of temple entry or claiming it. They may or may not want to enter that temple even when it is declared open to them. But it is the bounden duty of every caste Hindu to secure that opening for Harijans."
>
> "If all that there is in the universe is pervaded by God, that is to say, if the Brahmana and the Bhangi, the learned man and the scavenger, the Ezhava and the Pariah, no matter what caste they belong to—if all these are pervaded by Lord God, in the light of this Mantra, there is none that is high and none that is low, all are absolutely equal, equal because all are the

creatures of that Creator. And this is not a philosophical thing to be dished out to Brahmanas or Kshatriyas, but it enunciates an eternal truth which admits of no reduction, no palliation. And if that is so, how can anyone here dare to arrogate superiority to himself or herself over any other human being? I tell you, therefore, that if this Mantra holds good, if there is any man or woman here who believes that the temples are defiled by those [who are] called Avarnas, that person, I declare, would be guilty of a grave sin."

In consonance with his views about temple entry for Harijans, Gandhiji made it a point not to enter a Hindu temple which was not open to Harijans. Of course, as we have said before, his religion did not require of him to enter a temple. But he sometimes did it as a mark of courtesy. Even this courtesy he did not extend to the temples where Harijans had no free access.

Gandhiji set up an organisation, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, which was to work for the removal of all their disabilities. This organisation functions even after independence. It consists not only of politicians but also all those who on humanitarian grounds are against untouchability. To set an example, Gandhiji brought a Harijan family to live in the Ashram. He adopted their daughter as his own. He also blessed all the marriages that were celebrated between Harijans and caste Hindus. Some of these marriages took place in his own Ashram. We have seen how in 1932 he endangered his life to see that the disabilities of the Harijans were removed while they remained in the Hindu fold. He opposed the award of the British Prime Minister giving them separate electorates. He knew that a vast majority of them did not want to abandon their religion in spite of the fact that they could have equality with other citizens by merely changing it. Then even the Hindus would not regard them as untouchables.

While in Delhi, Gandhiji insisted on living in the Bhangi colony, where all the dignitaries, British or Indian, had to go and meet him and where many momentous meetings of the Working Committee were held.

As a result of all these efforts of Gandhiji, untouchability has been abolished by law after independence. Its practice has been made a penal offence. All public institutions, including temples, schools,

hotels, hostels, wells, etc., are by law open to the 'Harijans', as Gandhiji called the untouchables.

It is, therefore, sad to think that cases of discrimination and cruelty practised by caste Hindus on Harijans are occasionally reported from the rural areas. Whenever such cases have been reported, the enlightened public, especially the legislators, have unanimously expressed their abhorrence of such deeds and have insisted upon drastic action being taken against the perpetrators of these crimes. They have also demanded action being taken against the officials who have failed to protect the Harijans. Such transgression of the law can fairly be attributed to the laxity of the administration.

It is also a fact that social evils of long standing, even when removed through legislation, take a long time to disappear from the conduct of the people. We have an example of this in the violation of the law prescribing the minimum age for the marriage of girls. It is often violated in rural areas. But this also is mainly due to the laxity of the administration to enforce laws against social evils.

The campaign against untouchability may be said to have begun with the Buddha. Hindu reformers from time to time have denounced this inhuman custom and have allowed the untouchables to be members of their sects. Guru Nanak and his nine successors accepted the untouchables in the Sikh religion. Kabir and other religious sects of Sant Mat, throughout the Middle Ages, freely allowed the untouchables to join their brotherhood.

Gandhiji's movement after independence has the backing of a democratic government. If the Government is vigilant and prepared to enforce the law, it is hoped that this blot on Hindu society will soon disappear.

44

# Gandhiji and the Muslims

FOR Gandhiji the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity was no less important than that of the removal of untouchability. He held and often said that if this problem was not satisfactorily solved, rivers of blood would flow in India. He also held that Hindu-Muslim unity was vital to our struggle for freedom. Gandhiji's objective as defined by him was "to see the Universal Spirit of Truth face to face". For this, he felt and said, "One must be able to love the meanest creation as oneself." This love, without distinction of race, nationality, caste, creed or sex, was the basis of Gandhiji's universal toleration. This toleration is also inculcated by the Hindu scriptures. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna says: "As men approach me, so do I accept them in my love; men follow in every way my path."

Gandhiji's home atmosphere and early training, as we have seen, also emphasised this spirit of toleration. In his *Autobiography* he says: "....I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father and mother would visit the *Haveli** as also Siva's and Rama's temples and would take or send us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father.... They would have talks with my father on subjects religious and mundane. He had, besides, Musalman and Parsi friends, who would talk to him about their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect....I often

*Vaishnavite temple.

had a chance to be present at these talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me a toleration for all faiths."

Gandhiji went to South Africa, engaged by Muslim clients, with whom he developed intimate relations. Indians belonging to all communities, Muslims, Parsis and Hindus, had equal faith in his leadership and equally shared in the sacrifices and the honour involved in the South African struggle. When he established his Ashrams at the Phoenix and Tolstoy farms, the members belonged to all Indian communities. They also included white Christians. All the youngsters in these establishments were given instruction in their respective scriptures and encouraged to keep the restraints laid down therein. About this Gandhiji records: "I have always helped and encouraged them in keeping all their religious observances. I took care to see that they offered daily their *namaz*. There were Christians and Parsi youngsters too, whom I considered it my duty to encourage to follow their respective religious observances." In those days Gandhiji was engaged in the study of the main religions of the world. He had their scriptures on his table. When a Muslim friend saw the Holy Koran on his table, he told him in distress that to keep the Koran among other books was showing disrespect to it. The only proper way was to put it in a bag and hang it on the wall. To satisfy these sentiments of his Muslim friends, Gandhiji put the scripture in a bag and hung it after the manner of the Faithful.

When Gandhiji came to India he felt that the greatest hindrances to independence were untouchability and communal disharmony. He, therefore, availed himself of every opportunity to come into intimate contact with the Muslims. He says: "I had realised early in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Muslims. I never missed a single opportunity to remove the obstacles in the way of unity....My South African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my *ahimsa* would be put to its severest test....The conviction is still there. Every moment of my life I realise that God is putting me on my trial." This was written in 1926. How prophetic of the end!

Again, he writes, "I was seeking the friendship of good Musalmans and was eager to understand the Musalman mind through

contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives." Whenever a Muslim host invited him to stay at his place, he readily accepted the invitation. In Delhi he was a guest of Dr. Ansari as long as he lived. Elsewhere also he stayed with Muslim hosts whenever possible. When invited to the War Conference in Delhi (1918) he opened correspondence with the Viceroy for the release of the Ali brothers. He says: "In that connection I studied the Brothers' views and activities about the Khilafat....I felt that if I would become a true friend of the Muslims I must render all possible help in securing the release of the Brothers and a just settlement of the Khilafat question." Gandhiji said: "The British Prime Minister had admitted the justice of the Muslim demand about the Khilafat. I felt, therefore, bound to render all the help I could in securing a due fulfilment of the Prime Minister's pledge. It was not for me to enter into the absolute merits of the question, provided there was nothing immoral in their demands."

In November 1919, Gandhiji was invited to attend a joint conference of Hindus and Muslims at Delhi to deliberate on the Khilafat issue. The invitation said: "Not only the Khilafat question but also the question of cow protection would be discussed." Gandhiji suggested that the "two questions be not mixed up or considered in a spirit of bargain" and each must be decided on its own merits. His contention was that, "if the Khilafat question had a just and legitimate basis, the Hindus were bound to stand by the Muslims.... It would ill become them to bring in the cow question.... or to make terms with the Muslims just as it would ill become the Muslims to stop cow-slaughter as a price for Hindu support." Both parties must on such occasions act as good neighbours, understanding and helping each other. Gandhiji's view was accepted.

During the Khilafat and independence movements of 1920-21, Gandhiji and the Ali brothers were inseparable. They went about the country together. After the Khilafat movement had been abandoned by the Muslims in India, following the abolition of the institution in Turkey itself, the Hindus and Muslims drifted apart. There were communal riots in the Frontier, U.P. and elsewhere. As we have seen, this was intolerable to Gandhiji and he undertook a fast for 21 days in Delhi (1924) to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The fast had some effect for the time being but the communi-

ties continued to drift apart. In subsequent years the Muslims by and large were organised under the Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah, who was now against the independence movement. All efforts at understanding made by Gandhiji and successive presidents of the Congress failed. Every movement of satyagraha to dislodge British imperialism and secure swaraj for India started by the Congress was construed as designed against the Muslims and as an affront to them. Gandhiji's humanitarian effort for the uplift of the Harijans was represented as a move against Islam. Even the recitation of verses from the Koran by non-Muslims in Gandhiji's prayer-meetings was resented as an insult to Islam. The Congress, though it was fighting communalism of the Muslims as of the Hindus, was dubbed as a Hindu organisation which Gandhiji was representing as the leader of the caste Hindus, not even of the Hindus. Such was the atmosphere created that Gandhiji came to be regarded by the general Muslim population, who were then by and large under the influence of the League, as Islam's enemy No. 1. He and the Congress were, however, undeterred in their efforts to seek a basis of agreement. In 1944 Gandhiji was released from jail. He once again put himself in touch with Jinnah. The talks between the two leaders were infructuous. Thenceforward every conference that the British called, with the avowed object of transferring political power to the Indians, failed because the Muslim League would not accept any formula unless the Muslim demand for a separate sovereign state was granted. We have already described how ultimately the League had its own way and the country was divided. Even before his death Gandhiji had proved to the Muslims that he was their friend as he was that of all mankind. His assassination at the hands of a Hindu fanatic was due to the fact that he wanted the Muslims to live in peace, honour and freedom as citizens of India.

Greater love hath no man than he who lays down his life for those who consider him as their enemy.

# 45

# Gandhiji and Women

WITH his belief in non-violence, Gandhiji was against all inequality in any walk of life, political, economic or social. He held that inequality ultimately led to exploitation, which for him was violence. Also, he held that all work socially useful is of equal worth, whether that of a scavenger, a doctor, a lawyer, a merchant or a minister. Hence work should get, if not equal, at least equitable remuneration. In his Ashram, all the inmates, engaged in physical or intellectual work, were treated as equals and everyone was provided with facilities, according to his or her needs. Gandhiji made no distinction between men and women.

This was in accordance with what was current in ancient times in India. In Vedic times men and women were equal in all walks of life, including the religious and the intellectual. Therefore, in proclaiming the perfect equality of men and women, Gandhiji could and did claim that he was following the more ancient authorities than of the later law-givers, Manu and others. About this Gandhiji says:

> "The saying attributed to Manu that for women there can be no freedom is not to be sacrosanct. It only shows that probably, at the time when it was promulgated, women were kept in a state of subjection. The epithets used in our literature to describe a wife are 'ardhangana', 'the better half' and 'sahadharmini', 'the helpmate'. The husband addressing the wife as 'devi' or goddess does not show any disparagement. But,

unfortunately, a time came when the woman was divested of many of her rights and privileges and was reduced to a status of inferiority."

Gandhiji was against the pernicious system of child marriage. He considered such marriages *ab initio* null and void and as such, no marriage at all. A child widow was not, therefore, in reality a widow but a maiden, and must be treated as such....

He says:

> "We cry out for cow protection in the name of religion, but we refuse protection to the human cow in the shape of the girl widow. We would resent force in religion. But in the name of religion we force widowhood upon our girl widows who could not understand the import of the marriage ceremony. To force widowhood upon little girls is a brutal crime for which we Hindus are daily paying dearly. If our conscience was truly awakened, there would be no marriage before 15, let alone widowhood, and we would declare that these girls were never religiously married. There is no warrant in any Shastra for such widowhood.
>
> "So long as we have thousands of widows in our midst, we are sitting on a mine which may explode at any moment. If we would be pure, if we would save Hinduism, we must rid ourselves of this poison of enforced widowhood. The reform must begin by those who have girl widows taking courage in both their hands and seeing that the child widows in their charge are duly and well married—not remarried. They were never really married."

He was against all social and religious barriers to widow remarriage. Of course, in the case of adult widows, especially those with children, he would have liked them to remain true to their marriage vows and to their first love, rather than remarry. But, according to him this must apply equally to men. If a widow could not or did not wish to live alone, she had every right to remarry and society must not look down upon such marriages. Remarriage was any day better than the suppression of a legitimate desire through fear of misguided public opinion based on custom or the authority of certain quotations in the Shastras, which are against reason or humanity. Gandhiji says: "Voluntary widowhood, consciously

adopted by a woman who has felt the affection of a partner, adds grace and dignity to life, sanctifies the home and uplifts religion itself. Widowhood imposed by religion or custom is an unbearable yoke, and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion."

He was against the purdah system. It crippled not only the free movement of women but interfered with their advancement, and their capacity for doing work useful to society. I have seen Gandhiji simply ignoring purdah. He insisted on his being taken to the *sanctum sanctorum* of the family, the ladies' quarters. And who could resist him in this? The Hindu women considered themselves as blessed to have the *darshan* of the 'Mahatma', as he undoubtedly was in their eyes. Even in Muslim families which observed purdah, he insisted on meeting the ladies and would take no refusal. The women of such families also would want to see him not through the chinks in their doors but face to face. Gandhiji says:

> "Chastity is not a hot-house growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of the purdah. It must grow from within, and to be worth anything it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as Sita's. It must be a very poor thing that cannot stand the gaze of men. Men, to be men, must be able to trust their womenfolk, even as the latter are compelled to trust them. Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralysed. Rama would be nowhere without Sita, free and independent even as he was himself. But for robust independence, Draupadi is perhaps a better example. Sita was gentleness incarnate. She was a delicate flower. Draupadi was a giant oak. She bent mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will. Bhima was terrible to everyone, but he was a lamb before Draupadi. She stood in no need of protection from anyone of the Pandavas. By seeking today to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India, we are interfering with the growth of free and independent-spirited men. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the 'untouchables' recoils upon our heads with a force thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our own weakness, indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Let us then tear down the purdah with one mighty effort."

Meeting with the women of the house was necessary, as Gandhiji wanted them to participate along with men in satyagraha, the non-violent fight for the freedom of the country and to carry on the constructive programme, which was an integral part of that movement. He associated women in every activity that he undertook. He employed some of them in his secretarial work. He did not hesitate to send them to face difficult situations. This was witnessed in South Africa and more powerfully again when he asked some of them to live with the villagers, unattended by men, in riot-affected Noakhali. He had full confidence and trust in their capacity to defend themselves and their honour and if need be to lay down their lives for its protection. He did not want them to consider themselves as the waeker sex. Gandhiji says: "To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior." Further he says: "If women would forget that they belong to the weaker sex, then no doubt they can do infinitely more than men against war."

He was against the dowry system. For the middle and poor classes it was a nightmare. It was also on this account that while there was joy on the birth of the male child, there was expressed or silent mourning on the birth of a female child. Gandhiji says: "Invidious discrimination against the female sex is an anachronism. I fail to see any reason for jubilation over the birth of a son and for mourning over that of a daughter. Both are God's gifts. They have an equal right to live, and are equally necessary to keep the world going."

Gandhiji was also against heavy expenditure in connection with marriages. He wanted to simplify marriage ceremonials. He was against feasting on such occasions. Many marriages were celebrated in his Ashram. All that was done was the recitation of the simple Ashram prayer and some advice from Gandhiji to the young couple on how they should live a contented and happy life of service. At the end of this simple ceremony, he would present to the couple a copy of the *Bhagavadgita*. Following his example, many rich men celebrated the marriages of their children without giving or receiving dowry or calling many friends

to costly receptions. I remember that when Jamnalal Bajaj's daughters were married the invitation card to those from outside Wardha said that their blessings for the young couple were solicited but they need not take the trouble to be present at the wedding.

Gandhiji invited the women of India to participate in the satyagraha movement not only because they were equal to men but also because they possessed virtues which made them superior to men in a non-violent fight which requires infinite patience and uncomplaining and silent suffering. He says : "....woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in satyagraha which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith."

How was it possible for women, particularly those coming from high families, brought up in the seclusion of their homes to participate in the struggle for national freedom where they would come in contact with men? This was made possible by the utter purity of Gandhiji's character. The menfolk knew that the honour of their women was safe in a non-violent struggle guided by Gandhiji. They, therefore, had no hesitation in allowing their women to participate in the freedom fight.

Even as a general rule he considered that the standards observed by women in their conduct were superior to those of men. He, therefore, would advise the latter to copy the former and not *vice versa.* He did not consider man's wrongs to be woman's rights in her pursuit of equality. In moral conduct he believed in levelling up and not in levelling down.

Gandhiji held that woman's grace lay in her character and her

modesty. He did not want her to be a plaything for man. He, therefore, was against costly clothes, jewellery and make-up. Talking to women on one occasion, he said: "Woman must cease to consider herself the object of man's lust. The remedy is more in her hands than man's. She must refuse to adorn herself for men, including her husband, if she will be an equal partner with man."

Again, addressing a women's meeting, he said: "If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything. I have mentally become a woman in order to steal into her heart. I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do, and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so-called rights as her husband. And you see her today as simple as myself. You find no necklaces, no fineries on her. I want you to be like that. Refuse to be the slaves of your own whims and fancies, and the slaves of men. Refuse to decorate yourselves, and don't go in for scents and lavender waters. If you (women) want to give out the proper scent it must come out of your heart, and then you will captivate not man, but humanity. It is your birth-right."

Nobody in modern times has done more for the uplift of women than Gandhiji. Their participation in the freedom struggle, based as it was on non-violence, made it possible for them to discharge their duties as citizens and, as rights flow from obligations fulfilled, Indian women after independence were given equal opportunities with men in all spheres of national life. There never has been any opposition from men in this respect. Unlike their sisters in Europe and elsewhere, Indian women did not have to undergo a separate struggle to secure their rights.

# 46

# Prohibition

IN consonance with his idea about the simplification of life through the limitation of wants, necessary for a healthy, cultural and moral life, Gandhiji wanted India to be free from the evil of the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs. The latter are universally considered an evil, except when used for medicinal purposes. But this is not the case with intoxicating drinks. Their use is customary in many countries, especially in the West. But reformers even there have condemned the habit. However, the general opinion there is that moderate use of alcoholic drinks is not harmful. This is only a negative permission. It is a fact that the use of alcoholic drinks is habit-forming and there is always the possible danger of excess. It is more so among the poor whose power of resistance to a bad habit is the lowest. Also, they can ill-afford to indulge in this expensive habit. They generally waste in drink their earnings, which could be profitably used for raising the standard of living of their families and promoting the welfare of their children. Often the labourer as soon as he gets his wage visits the grog shop before he goes home. The consequence is that the family lives in chronic poverty and indebtedness. Thus the innocent are made to suffer for the guilty. In the case of most people, specially the poor, intoxicating drinks impair their intelligence which distinguishes man from the animal. It also deadens one's moral sensitivity. Gandhiji says: "Having identified myself with labour, I know what ruin drink has brought to the homes of labourers given to drink. I know

that they will not touch liquor if it was not within [their] reach. We have contemporaneous evidence that drinkers themselves are in many cases asking for prohibition."

For all these reasons Gandhiji wanted India to be dry. It has often been argued here and elsewhere that a moderate and judicious use of liquor by those who can afford it is not injurious. But apart from the tendency to excess, the use of liquor by those who can afford it, even when they drink in moderation, is socially undesirable.

Believing as he did that all wealth is socially created, Gandhiji held that even the rich had no right to live in luxury, more especially in a poor country like India where millions of people lived below the subsistence level. Further, Gandhiji believed with the *Gita* that the common man behaved as his supposed superiors did. It is, therefore, the social duty of the rich and the educated to refrain from liquor and set a good example.

The plea that no Government had the right to regulate the private conduct of the citizens was not admitted by Gandhiji. Individual rights and liberties have validity only when they are consistent with public welfare. Anyway, this plea of individual rights has no validity in democratic India. Given local option, the overwhelming majority of residents would not like a liquor shop to be opened in their neighbourhood. Gandhiji says: "Those who speak in the name of individual freedom do not know their India. There is as much right of a person to demand drinking facilities from the State as there is to demand facilities for the supply of public women for the satisfaction of his animal passion."

Why did Gandhiji insist on prohibition by law, when he knew that the law in this respect is said to have failed in America? Gandhiji says: "India is not America. The American example is a hindrance rather than a help to us. In America drinking carries no shame with it. It is the fashion there to drink. It reflects the greatest credit on the determined minority in America that by sheer force of its moral weight it was able to carry through the prohibition measure, however short-lived it was. I do not regard that experiment to have been a failure."

Gandhiji further says : "In no part of the world is prohibition as easy to carry out as in India, for with us it is only a minority that

drinks. Drinking is generally considered disrespectable. And there are millions, I believe, who have never known what drink is."

Gandhiji knew his India in this respect. It is a fact that generally the higher castes do not drink. It is also not customary in India to keep liquor in the house or offer it to visiting guests, as is done in the West. Rarely is it served at social gatherings and parties. Our women generally do not drink. The Muslims, the Jains and the Vaishnavites are prohibited by their religion from drinking. Nowadays some of the newly rich and the sophisticated, after the Western fashion, have acquired the drink habit. Even they have their drink either in clubs or restaurants. The poor drink liquor at the drink shops. If there is any country where prohibition by law has a fair chance of success, it is undoubtedly India.

It is not my purpose here to go into the reasons that have induced some of the State Governments to go back on prohibition except to point out that they have done so because they find the liquor trade the easiest source of raising revenues for their ever-expanding administrative expenditure. The question of revenue is irrelevant now. If people do not waste their money on liquor, they will use it for purchasing other things. In India today everything is taxed from the match-box to the motor-car. In giving up liquor revenue, therefore, the State Governments would lose little of their income.

Gandhiji says :

"Let it be remembered that this drink and drugs revenue is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return tenfold to the tax-payer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical. It falls like a dead weight on those who are least able to bear it....

"The loss of revenue is only apparent. Removal of this degrading tax enables the drinker, *i.e.*, the tax-payer, to earn and spend better. Apart, therefore, from this tremendous gain, it means a substantial economic gain to the nation."

Criticising the apathy of the Congress Governments in respect of prohibition as early as 1938, he says: "And yet one finds Ministers drawing up prohibition programmes in a proper *bania* spirit. They think of their deficits. I wonder what they will do if all the wine-bibbers and opium-eaters suddenly give up their drinks and drugs!

They will manage somehow, it may be answered. Why will they not do so voluntarily? Surely, merit lies in doing the right thing voluntarily, not compulsorily. The Bihar Government did not come to a standstill, when the earthquake swallowed more than their annual income. What do the Governments all over India do, when famines and floods ruin people and materially reduce the State revenue? I maintain that the Congress Governments break the spirit if not the letter of their pledge, when they delay prohibition for the sake of revenue."

As for corruption in the police, this is a problem any Government worth the name has to solve, even apart from carrying out the prohibition law. However, prohibition need not rely merely on the law and the police. The reformer must create public opinion as was done by Gandhiji who had no political power. It is a fact that many people who would not have touched liquor before independence have taken to it now. About cultivating public opinion, Gandhiji said: "If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future Government the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics.

"Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drunkard and the opium-addict from the curse.

"Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit.

"Congress Committees can open recreation booths where the tired labourer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refreshments and find suitable games. All this work is fascinating and uplifting. The non-violent approach to swaraj is a novel approach. In it, old values give place to new. In the violent way such reforms may find no place. Believers in that way, in their impatience and, shall I say, ignorance, put off such things to the day of deliverance. They forget that lasting and healthy deliverance comes from within, *i.e.*, from self-purification. Constructive workers make legal prohibition easy and successful even if they pave the way for it."

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# Other Items of Constructive Programme

We have written about important items of Gandhiji's constructive programme. To these may be added the reform of our educational system. The existing system was imposed upon the nation by the alien government to serve its own administrative requirements. But Englishmen never do anything that is advantageous to them without giving altruistic reasons for it. Macaulay held that it was the aim of this education to make the educated Indians Englishmen except "in the colour of their skin and the blood running in their veins".

The need to reform this type of education was felt by some of our leading politicians and reformers long before Gandhiji. They wanted the educational system to be in consonance with the genius of the nation and its requirements. Education imparted through a foreign language and which had no other aim than subordinate service stunted the growth of the pupil. It impaired his initiative.

Reform of the educational system was introduced by Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj. He wanted to revive the old Gurukul idea wherein pupils and teachers lived together as in a family, away from the busy haunts of men. But the reform was sectional, for it could not but be for the Hindus only. This reform was again taken up by the nationalists after the partition of Bengal. They were dissatisfied with the foreign system which had no high

ideal behind it and was designed to fill the lower ranks of the administration. National education as conceived by the nationalists was one of the points of difference between them and the Liberals, which led to the split in the Congress in Surat in 1907. It was again tackled by the Home Rule movement under Mrs. Besant. Reform in education was also brought about by Rabindranath Tagore in his institution at Santiniketan. He believed that education could best be imparted in an atmosphere of freedom and the beauty and joy of life. All these schemes of educational reform substituted the mother-tongue in place of the foreign language, English, as the medium of instruction.

Gandhiji's educational reform was the most radical. He made socially useful activity as the medium of instruction. It must be done meticulously and must have some utility or value. He wanted to combine learning with doing socially useful work. Though Gandhiji conceived this idea of co-relating education with activity, it was not entirely new. It had been advocated by philosophers and educationists in Europe from Rousseau to Dewey in modern times.

It is not my purpose here to elaborate on the system of basic education or *Nai Talim*, as Gandhiji called it. It was the most scientific method of educating the young. Its exposition will require a book by itself. The curious will find some detailed study of the system in *The Latest Fad* by the present writer.

It will not be out of place to mention here another item of the constructive programme, which was added after it had been decided that the nation's representatives should enter the legislatures, even though they had not the power to change the Government. It was held that Congressmen as representatives of the people would be able to ventilate their grievances and expose the evil deeds of the foreign Government. This additional item in the constructive programme is the education of the voters. It became more necessary when it was decided to form popular Governments in the provinces, under the 1935 Act. It has become vital today for the healthy growth of our infant democracy. We have all at once, unlike other democracies, introduced in our Constitution universal franchise both for men and women. This universal vote is combined with almost universal ignorance.

A great English writer has said that to make democracy effective, "we must educate our masters". This education has no reference to the education imparted through schools and learning the three R's. It is popular political education which informs the people about their rights and obligations in a democracy. We imparted this education to the mass of our people during our struggle for freedom. They were educated by mass propaganda and above all by the suffering and sacrifice of their leaders for the cause of our national freedom. The masses faithfully followed our example.

The education of "our masters", the voters, even today will not be through schools and colleges, good and useful as that is. It will have to be done by conduct as well as through all the media of popular education, the Press, the platform, the cinema, the radio, etc. It will have to be done, above all, by the leaders keeping before the people high standards of political behaviour. It is, therefore, sad to think that the Sarvodaya leaders and workers have been indifferent to the education of the voters. More sad is it that in the last two decades, instead of rightly educating the voters, we have mis-educated them. We have in our elections revived the caste system, which was dying out as a bad social system. We have often placed before the voters the temptation of money and even of liquor. The ruling parties have also used their political power to coerce the voters to vote for candidates of their choice. They have also encouraged defections from other parties through the lure of office or other advantages. If our democracy is to survive, we will have to educate the voters to exercise their vote freely, fairly and fearlessly, without succumbing to the lure of caste, locality, money, liquor or any other material advantage. They must vote only with a view to the public good, as they conceive it.

There are other items of the constructive programme like the propagation of Hindi-Hindustani, the reform in our personal and public hygiene, agricultural and food reform, etc., which I do not propose to write about here.

As a matter of fact, the constructive programme was meant to revolutionise the nation's outlook in all the spheres of social life, social in its most comprehensive sense. Gandhiji tried to cleanse our life from our latrines to our souls. His was a comprehensive

revolution as it was based upon the revaluation of our basic values. He wanted to train and discipline the nation. He rightly believed that as the violent soldier has to be trained and disciplined, so must be the non-violent soldier. As in some countries the whole adult population is trained and disciplined for total war, so must the whole nation, which was expected to join the freedom fight, be trained and disciplined through the constructive programme for satyagraha and for the reconstruction of the country. For the violent soldier his training and discipline consist in drill, mock fighting which kills nobody, long marches, etc., which lead nowhere. All this training and discipline is considered necessary for war though when actual war comes it has little value. Each of its items has no value in itself. This is otherwise in the case of training for satyagraha. Each item of the constructive programme is designed to have worth and value by and in itself apart from its use as training for the freedom fight. It strengthens the nation by eliminating from its life some of the drawbacks in its character which, as we have said, Gandhiji held, were largely responsible for our slavery.

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# Gandhiji and Organisation

THE use of the weapons of truth and non-violence to redress political and international injustice and wrongs was so revolutionary an idea that many other qualities that Gandhiji possessed and which made for the success of his schemes and plans are generally overlooked or forgotten. We have earlier mentioned Gandhiji as an intellectual of his time. He was also a great advocate. This quality often made his British opponents feel that he was not playing an honest game and had something up his sleeve. They dubbed him a cunning Asiatic. His Indian critics called him a crafty Bania. Likewise, little note is taken of his great organising capacity. At no time in history has there been a lack of truthful and non-violent individuals. What distinguished Gandhiji from these good souls was that he made truth and non-violence dynamic. They must not only serve the individual actively but also society. This he did by his organising capacity. It brought success to his schemes even when they looked utopian to begin with.

Ever since his student days, Gandhiji kept a diary in which were recorded not only what he saw, felt and did, but also his accounts. Even the expenditure of a few pennies or annas is recorded therein. I have seen him writing his diary, however late was the hour, when he retired from his strenuous work.

This organisation of his life in England enabled him to make the most of the limited monetary resources at his disposal. In South Africa he not only organised the political life of the Indians settled

there but also their social life, teaching them habits of hygienic living. Twice he had to organise an Ambulance Corps, once during the Boer War and again at the time of the so-called Zulu rebellion. In the course of the struggle in South Africa, he organised the march of some 2,500 Indians, males and females, from Natal to the Transvaal. It was successfully done in spite of scarcity of funds and other difficulties in a land under a hostile Government which wanted the Indians to quit. He told the marchers of this peaceful army that anybody who fell ill during the march would do so at his peril. The rest of the army would march on, leaving him to take care of himself as best he or she could.

I saw this organising capacity at work, as I have mentioned before, in the few days I was privileged to be with him at Santiniketan when, in 1915, he returned from South Africa. He was merely a guest there, yet he could not resist the temptation of keeping a scheme of reform of the hygiene at the poet's home, before the inmates through organised self-help.

I again saw this capacity at work in Champaran. He organised not only his work but also the life of those who had volunteered to help him in the conduct of his enquiry.

Again and again was this capacity of Gandhiji to organise work and life witnessed in all his undertakings, whether of labour in Ahmedabad or the kisan agitation in Kheda and Borsad. So wisely and well was the Majoor Mahajan Sangh organised in Ahmedabad that for the last forty years there has been no strike and differences have been amicably settled. He provided for the Sangh day-to-day constructive work by which they could help themselves and their children. The Majoor Mahajan Sangh at Ahmedabad is considered the best in India.

As soon as the Indian National Congress accepted his leadership, he commenced the work of reorganising it. He made it an effective instrument of national work. Before him, as we have said, it was a loose organisation of English-educated Indians. It met for three days in a year, when the lawyer leaders, who were its main support, were free from their legal work at Xmas time. Gandhiji reshaped the constitution of the Congress, made it a mass organisation with its branches throughout the length and

breadth of the country, functioning for the whole year, looking into the grievances of the people and helping them.

He further organised the working of every item of his constructive programme. For organising khadi work, he created the Charkha Sangh. For the cottage and village industries, he created the All-India Village and Cottage Industries Board. For work connected with the removal of untouchability, he organised the Achhut Nivaran Samiti. For the uplift of the Adivasis and the backward classes, he organised the Adimjati Sevak Sangh. When the Congress accepted his new system of education, he organised it through the Nai Talim Sangh. For cow protection, he had the Go Seva Sangh. For the propagation of Hindi was organised the Hindi Pracharini Sabha. Even the application of truth and non-violence to solve political and international disputes was carefully organised. Before him truth and non-violence had, for their success, relied upon their inherent goodness. The wicked had always organised themselves. It is said that there is honour even among thieves and murderers. They would often go to jail or the gallows rather than betray a companion. Gandhiji realised that if truth and non-violence were to fight untruth and violence, they must be organised in a powerful movement, not based merely on the goodness of the individual but on the goodness organised to withstand organised evil.

While the organisation of satyagraha was confined to those interested in politics, the organisation of the different schemes of constructive work was not left to the politicians alone. Gandhiji utilised the services of all persons who, though not prepared to take the risks involved in the freedom fight, were nevertheless interested in his humanitarian, economic and social work. He utilised the ability and the services of all persons of goodwill, who wanted reform in any field of national reconstruction. For instance, the ability of Thakkar Bapa, a member of the Servants of India Society which did not believe in satyagraha, was utilised for the uplift of the Adivasis and other depressed classes. Birla was not prepared to leave his business and march to jail, but took interest in Harijan uplift. The Harijan Sevak Sangh was organised under his chairmanship. The organisation of cottage and village industries was entrusted to Kumarappa, a chartered accountant and economist. *Nai Talim* work was entrusted to the educationists, Zakir

Husain, Asha Devi and Aryanayakam. Gandhiji rightly held that a nation anxious to advance needed all kinds of services. Anybody who renders service in any field of national life is doing patriotic work. He did not believe that patriotism is the monopoly of the politicians. A mother who brings up her children properly is doing national service. A scientist doing his work well is benefiting the nation. An honest merchant and a manufacturer are engaged in patriotic work. For Gandhiji even the sweeper who does his work well is entitled to honour. Nothing was too small or insignificant to deserve attention from Gandhiji. He tried to improve all facets of the national life.

Organisation is not possible without *samyama*, discipline, a word which has come into disrepute today because those who utter it themselves lack discipline. Gandhiji had strictly disciplined his life. He was a *karmayogi*. He was disciplined in eating, talking, walking, in sleep and wakefulness, as the *Gita* says. He was also a great disciplinarian. He would not tolerate shoddy work. He would sometimes stop his conversation with visitors if he saw a young man or woman in the Ashram not cleaning the utensils properly. I have seen him refusing to wear his cap when he wore one, even if there was a tiny stain on it.

Organisation of public work is not possible unless proper budget is framed and exact accounts are kept of receipts and disbursements. In respect of accounts, Gandhiji was most particular. He would insist upon the fulfilment of the requirements of bookkeeping. One day I mentioned to him that I utilised the provident fund of those who were working in the Gandhi Ashram as capital for the furtherance of Khadi work. The workers thus got a little more interest than what they would through the banks. He said, "No, Professor, you are doing wrong. You are violating a healthy procedure. Provident Fund money must be kept in a bank."

He often told us that if the procedures laid down for the proper functioning of an organisation were violated for a temporary advantage, it would lead to complications which would be hard to correct afterwards. Not only the spirit but the form also must be correct. It was like a healthy soul in a healthy body. He himself knew all the intricacies of accounting. He would critically examine the budgets of the institutions working under him and examine their

balance-sheets. He also insisted that public work must not be done by borrowing money. He was so careful about public money that after the work was done there was no deficit but a little surplus.

While he was against borrowing for public work and was careful about every pie spent, he considered it a mark of inefficiency if the amount budgeted was not spent. About the crore of rupees collected as Tilak Swaraj Fund in 1921, he said that if it were not spent inside the year, it would be a mark of inefficiency on the part of the workers. It would mean that the work chalked out for the year was not faithfully and meticulously performed.

Gandhiji, while he did not hesitate to spend lakhs of rupees where the expenditure was justified would get upset if any of the few things he personally used were lost. In Champaran, Devadas, then eighteen, was in charge of his personal belongings. He lost a third of a pencil used by his father for his writing work. This upset Gandhiji and he was almost angry. There are many instances when he would take to task those in charge of his few belongings if anything was lost in the crowded and tumultuous receptions he received everywhere in his travels.

About public money he always said that it must be used as one's own money. Unfortunately, after independence, our ministers and administrators and those in charge of public funds follow Gandhiji's advice literally. They treat public money as their own !

If one examines the programmes placed before the public by the former national leaders and those of Gandhiji, one would find little difference. But the difference lay in the capacity to organise the programmes. While Gandhiji did this, his forbears generally failed to do so. Take, for instance, the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements sponsored by the earlier nationalists and by Gandhiji. The former, while advising people to purchase swadeshi, thought merely in terms of consumption but not of production. The result was that foreign cloth was passed off as swadeshi cloth. In Gandhiji's case not only did he think of consumption but he also took steps to see that production too increased with the increased demand. Take, again, the question of national education. While the nationalists could not organise it on any scale, Gandhiji was able to do so. This ability to organise constructive work even while he was

busy with political agitation and resistance to the foreign Government, marks him out from such nationalists who believed in direct action of the non-co-operation type. In his capacity to organise his private life and that of the country lay the secret of his success, apart from his ideas of the use of truth and non-violence as instruments for settling political and international disputes.

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# Gandhiji and Marx

SINCE the French Revolution the modern world has produced two great revolutionaries, Marx and Gandhi. The one believed in violent revolution to end an inequitable, unjust and anti-social order. The other believed that a real revolution to end the tyranny and oppression of the weak by the strong could only be carried out through resisting evil without deviating from the fundamentals of moral law, and its two cardinal principles of truth and non-violence. It would be interesting to examine wherein these two great revolutionaries agree and differ.

Marx held that philosophers had till then tried to explain the world, but the need was to change it. This was true, and that too in a limited sense, about the theories and speculations of Western philosophers in the Middle Ages and modern times. The ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics and the Epicureans had more or less practical aims. By their theories they wanted not only to explain the world, but also to reform it. This reformation was not meant merely to change the individual's behaviour, but to some extent change the basis of organised society as was done by Plato in his *Republic* and the *Laws*. Indian philosophers had always a practical aim in view. It was to change the basis of the individual's conduct so that it would be possible for him to attain his final goal, that of salvation, *nirvana* or self-realisation. The Indian seers and philosophers expected that as the behaviour of individuals changed for the better, it would have an effect upon col-

lective life. So far as change in the group-life was concerned, that was the work of law-givers like Manu and others.

Let us now see in what direction Marx wanted to change the world. His aims were the same as those of the French Revolution, to establish among men equality, liberty and brotherhood. These, aims are manifestly humanitarian in character. Having posited these aims, Marx searched for a method to bring about these changes in society. He felt that the method of change must be historical. He found that economics, more specially modes of production, were at the root of every change in all departments of life including the religious and the cultural. He held that this change would be accomplished through class-war, between those who controlled the means of production and those who did not. The successive revolutions in history have brought about the capitalist order of society where those who have taken possession of the means of production dominate the world. This class of capitalists has to be liquidated, and a classless society established through class-war and the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship will subsequently establish democracy, and then the State will wither away. There being no independent sovereign States, world peace will be automatically established. The proletariat of one country will not fight against the proletariat of another country, their interests being identical. The slogans used were "workers of the world unite" and "workers have nothing to lose except their chains".

In common language bereft of the metaphysical ideas of dialectical materialism and the "negation of negation", turning Hegel upside down, these were briefly Marx's aims and the process through which change was to be brought about. He thought the world was ripe for revolution, and it was round the corner.

It is believed that Lenin brought about such a revolution in Russia in 1917 during World War I. It is held that he established a classless society in his country. Marx had not expected the revolution to begin in an industrially backward country like Russia. He had expected that it would be brought about in industrially developed countries like Germany and England. There capitalism had reached its climax to produce contradictions which could only be resolved through class-war.

Since then, this revolution has been brought about by Russian arms in Eastern Europe and, with the help of Russia, in China. It is not my purpose here to describe the different interpretations of Marxist thought by Russia and China. Nor is it my purpose to record the choice language which the two countries use against each other.

The results of these Communist revolutions have so far been strife and struggle, internal and international. In the process, millions of people have lost their lives and more millions have suffered mental and physical cruelty. In the din of hatred and violence the humanitarian aims of Marx seem to have been forgotten. The result has been that the individual citizen no more enjoys his freedom and his civil rights. Even those in power live in fear. They may be dislodged from office any day, be accused of treason and be liquidated after being forced to admit the charges against them. Sometimes they are also obliged to admit that they had worked against the revolution from the very beginning. Where even the leaders of the people are suspect, there can be no brotherhood. As for equality, it has disappeared in the emergence of a new class of bureaucrats and technicians whose emoluments in cash and perquisites bear no relation to their ability or to the earnings of a worker in the field or the factory. The Communist regime is frankly dictatorial, and there appears to be little possibility of the establishment of democracy in the near future. As for the State far from withering away, it has become more powerful and all-pervasive. Also, where the Communists have achieved power, they have become intensely national. Their interests as nations are in conflict with other nations, whether Capitalist or Communist. The interests of Communist Russia as a nation are in conflict with those of Communist China. Therefore world peace based on the withering away of the State seems to be as distant as ever.

Instead of bringing peace in the international world, Communism has produced war and conflict even within the nation itself. This is so in countries where the Communists are in power. In a democratic country, on the other hand, internal violence has been eliminated.

Why is this so in spite of the humanitarian aims of Marx? It is because as a revolutionary Marx made no effort to change basic

moral or political values. He wanted his revolutionary aims to be achieved through conventional means, the means which have been us d through the ages to bring about changes. These have been used in the past both for aggrandisement and for resisting tyranny, injustice, and for achieving freedom. They are those of chicanery, deceit, fraud, hate, violence and war.

Democracy in internal politics had created some valuable conventions. These have been swept away by the Communists. (For the Marxist, democracy and capitalism are convertible terms except when the former is used for a Communist regime which is called a People's Democracy.) Though in democracy armed conflict has been eliminated in the field of internal politics, violence has not been altogether eliminated. It manifests itself in the exploitation of the masses by those who own the instruments of modern production. Yet even here the extreme forms of exploitation, which existed in the days of Marx, have since disappeared. The labourers under the democratic regimes do not want to cast off their 'chains' for the promised heaven of communism ! In several countries there are socialist and labour governments brought about non-violently by the free vote of the people.

Not only have the Marxists maintained the old values in the political field, but they have sharpened them too. To make them more effective, they have dispensed with all conventional restraints introduced in internal and international politics in modern times. The seeming success so far achieved by the Communist regimes in the national and international fields is largely due to the greater use of cunning, deceit and violence. As a matter of fact, for the Communist there is only one value. Whatever is in the interest of the proletariat is right and just. Who decides what is for the benefit of the masses? The dictatorship may be even of a Stalin as long as he wields power. After his death history may be re-written and he may be accused of being a cruel tyrant.

Gandhiji did not minimise the value of economics in the life of the individual or the group. He held that the grinding poverty of the masses of India worked for their degradation. It must be removed. But unlike Marx he did not think that all human values and institutions were the result of the working of economic forces. Gandhiji laboured to achieve the same humanitarian aims as

Marx, of establishing equality, freedom, brotherhood and democracy. He, however, did not believe that dictatorship based on violence would automatically evolve itself into democracy. With his belief in non-violence Gandhiji could not advocate any other form of Government except democracy. As soon as the Congress accepted his leadership, he framed for it a democratic constitution based upon universal franchise, both for men and women. Before Gandhiji drew up this constitution, the Congress was not a mass organisation but a forum for the educated. He, like Marx, talked of the withering away of the State. But as a practical politician he could not envisage a time when the State would disappear. He held that this would be possible only when most people were "a law unto themselves", so that they automatically did the right thing. As a practical proposition Gandhiji held that that government is the best which governs the least. For bringing about these revolutionary changes, Gandhiji tried to change the existing values which had so far gained currency among the peoples of the world, in the political, and more especially, in the international field. He, therefore, led the national freedom movement to work in consonance with the new values. After all, any lasting and comprehensive revolution must start with revaluing values. As we have said earlier, Gandhiji wanted the morality which guides men's individual and social conduct, however often it may be violated, to regulate their behaviour in the political field. This social morality must have currency not only in the field of internal politics but it must also regulate international politics, where it has never been recognised so far. He felt that to realise the humanitarian aims, the means employed must be in consonance with the ends in view. The means must be as pure as the ends are high. Gandhiji made no distinction between ends and means. He held that they were, as we have said before, convertible terms. The means used affect the ends in view. If the means neglect or violate the requirements of the moral law, the ends will not be what were intended and worked for. Often fraud and violence seem to yield quick results. But the after-effects are bound to be contrary to the aims in view, as we have pointed out in the case of the Communist revolution.

Therefore, in his struggle against alien rule, Gandhiji conducted his campaign on the principles of truth and non-violence. It will

be seen that this is a more fundamental revolution than that of the Communists. It changes the values that have prevailed so far in the political field, more specially in the international field. The old values, as we have said, have been tried in the past, and have failed.

Gandhiji's non-violent and peaceful methods of resistance were tried in gaining for India its freedom from the foreign yoke. His movement succeeded, though no doubt it was helped by favourable world events. Even violent struggles for national freedom have succeeded when circumstances in the international world were favourable. However, it must be admitted that the satyagraha struggle was the main cause which made the English quit India. The two nations, India and England, parted company in comparative friendliness. Gandhiji held that what was possible in the struggle for the independence of India could be made possible to solve the international problems of conflict which plague the world today. The struggle to establish international justice and peace will have to be conducted in Gandhiji's spirit of the supremacy of the moral law. It will have to work in consonance with his two basic principles of truth and non-violence, or if the politicians prefer to state these principles in political terms, through open diplomacy and disarmament. There seems to be no other way in this nuclear age.

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# Was Gandhiji Modern?

WORDS, terms, especially abstract ones, are often used without a full knowledge of their content. This is more so in religion and politics. In religion words like God, *devata*, angel, devil, heaven and hell, and in politics terms like revolution, democracy, dictatorship, socialism, Marxism, proletariat, revivalism, reaction and culture are loosely used. This ambiguity often leads to confusion in thought. One is sometimes at a loss to understand what the disputants who use these words exactly mean by them.

Gandhiji has often been called by his critics a reactionary, a friend of the capitalists and imperialists. The more generous of his critics have described him as a revivalist. Sometimes a comparison has been made between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal. The latter was modern and the former, to put it mildly, a revivalist. It is dangerous to classify important personalities in this way. One may as well ask, "Were the Buddha, Mahavira and Christ modern?" They are modern as long as their life and teachings have meaning and significance for humanity. Jawaharlal's mould of thought was Western. His outlook on life was uncertain, sometimes Indian and again Western. Gandhiji's thought, expressed in the language of the masses of India, was pre-eminently Indian, in spite of many influences from the West. But if we are to understand Gandhiji's thought in its proper perspective, we must assign to the word 'modern' its proper content. Often the word is used in a double sense. In India it is used for a person whose external life is

patterned after the West, the so-called capitalist or the Communist West. The Indian members of the higher administrative services before independence patterned their life after the fashions prevalent among the upper and middle classes in the capitalist West. Many of them do so even now. The newly rich also do the same. Some of them make themselves ridiculous, missing the finer nuances of the Western ways. I have seen the wife of an important dignitary sitting at the dining-table, using two forks, instead of a fork and a knife or a fork and a spoon. This is one variety of the moderns. The other is of those whose outlook on life is rational, scientific, democratic and egalitarian.

Obviously Gandhiji was not modern in the sense of the former, the "koi hai", type. Let us now see if he was modern in the latter sense. Did he believe in rational thought? Religion has always been conservative in its approach to life. Was Gandhiji conservative or revivalist or reactionary in his conception of what constitutes true spirituality? As we have said before, he believed in God whose existence, he admitted, he could not logically prove. For him Truth was God. The moral law was God. He held that whoever believed in the moral law was spiritual and godly. This moral law, he held, could not be practised in a cave or on a mountain-top. It must manifest itself in every activity of man in society. He for himself did not indulge in the forms and ceremonials of the Hindu religion. He did not observe its holy days, including Holi, in which Jawaharlal participated as any villager in India, believing that this led to mass contact. Gandhiji believed in a formless and attributeless God. It could not be otherwise when he declared that Truth is God.

But does belief in God militate against rationality and science? All great scientists are not non-believers. They hold that science has little to do with the primordial cause or the causeless cause. As a matter of fact, the scientists today have discarded the very idea of cause. They only investigate and find out the processes by which change is brought about. Great and famous scientists like Newton, Einstein, J. C. Bose, Raman and many others are for belief in God. Only they did not take God inside their laboratories. And their search was for "truth", which, according to Gandhiji, is God.

As a matter of fact, the great scientists of the world have believed in some higher power than what they can discover in their laboratories. A real scientist is full of humility. He knows that the field of knowledge is like an unexplored ocean on the tiny shore of which he is privileged to gather a few precious shells. Not only does science teach its votaries humility but it also teaches him that the mystery of the universe deepens with every further advance of science. These are spiritual qualities. In contrast to this the universe of the common people is more simple. They know that this "that is all" is the creation of one God or many. This one or many can be propitiated by prayer and appropriate rites and ceremonials laid down in their scriptures. If even after that they have to suffer, they console themselves with the thought that it is their destiny, fate or *kismat.*

Did Gandhiji believe in science? Even the village cultivator and potter believe in science. In spite of his belief in God, the cultivator employs all the science he knows in cultivating his land. So does the potter. He does not think that given the clay, the pots and the bricks will be manufactured for him by reason of his prayer to God. The only drawback is that these villagers, as they believe in God, also believe in many superstitions which have grown around them for centuries and which may be against science and rational thought.

Did Gandhiji believe in such superstitions? Did he believe in untouchability? Did he believe in the caste system or any other undemocratic, anti-social and irrational practices and institutions that have grown around the religion he professed?

But let us understand what science means. Primarily it is a method of investigation to acquire and advance human knowledge. This method makes use of observation, investigation, experiment, experience and, wherever necessary, analysis. The second aspect of science is to formulate a theory or law which will apply to a class of phenomena and will rationalise knowledge. This is as important as the method of investigation. Without this theorising and rationalising, every material object, physical or psychic, will remain an isolated fact. If our investigation gave no general law, one would be obliged to examine each grain of rice in a bag to find out its quality. In that case, one cannot synthesise or reconstruct. The third aspect of science is that of applying the knowledge so gained

for practical purposes. This is technology or know-how by which science is able to produce things as useful as steam, electricity, magnetism, etc., or as destructive as the atom and the hydrogen bombs. Science thus applied merely gives power. How this power is to be utilised for the advance of humanity is pre-eminently a social, moral and spiritual problem.

Let us now see if Gandhiji was scientific in his approach to the tasks he had in view. He wanted to provide work for the half-starved and half-naked millions unemployed and under-employed, living in lakhs of villages in India. This, he thought, could be done through the revival of the spinning-wheel and other cottage and village industries. Viewed uncritically and apart from the social problem Gandhiji wanted to solve, in an age of mechanised big mills and factories, this looks like 'reaction', 'revivalism', 'obscurantism', the 'putting back of the clock of progress', or whatever else the so-called modernist may choose to call it. Before the invention of steam and its application to industry, the production of cotton and woollen yarn was a necessity both in the East and in the West. Was the reintroduction of the *charkha* and other crafts in the modern age an act of necessity ? Yes, in a sense it was an act of necessity, but not in the sense in which it was a necessity in the past. It was not a physical necessity but a moral, social, economic and political necessity, if unmitigated poverty resulting from unemployment and semi-employment was to be relieved. But even on this, did Gandhiji bring his scientific mind to bear? As we have stated before, he offered a prize of one lakh of rupees to a scientist or technician who invented a *charkha,* which could yield more yarn and which could be produced in the villages and repaired there. Also, as we have said before when discussing Gandhiji's economic ideas, he had no objection to the production of electricity, ship-building, etc. Only he did not like the craze for big machines when people had no work to do.

Let us now look at the social field of Gandhiji's activity. We have already mentioned the abolition of untouchability, the caste system and the inequality of women, etc., and other superstitions in Hindu society, which he tried to remove. Apart from this, his whole life was devoted to the search for truth through investigation, experiment and experience. He has described his autobiography

as "Experiments with Truth". In every field of social activity Gandhiji had a scientific approach. When he wanted a balanced diet for the poor, he did not invite *vaids* and *hakims* but practitioners of modern medicine to investigate the matter. If ever he consulted medical men or if they insisted on examining and treating him, he did not call even Hakim Ajmal Khan, but modern doctors.

Was he rational in his approach to problems ? We have seen that he rejected every custom that was against reason. He wanted a revision even of the Shastras to eliminate such passages as assigned an inferior position to the so-called lower castes and women. He always told those who joined him in the freedom struggle to accept nothing on his authority but to examine every problem on the touchstone of reason. He did not impose his will on others. Rather, he asked his followers to rebel against his authority and justify it by results and in that event he would accept their judgment. There are many examples of this. I would record one such here. The Congress had made it a rule that every member must wear khadi. But pure khadi cloth would only be given to those who contributed a certain amount of self-spun yarn. Unwilling to spin, many Congressmen purchased yarn and brought it to the khadi *bhandars* to get khadi. As Director of the Gandhi Ashram engaged in the production of khadi in U.P., I told Gandhiji that I would not demand yarn from the customers, since most of them would purchase yarn in the market and did not spin for themselves. This, I felt, encouraged deception. I brought the matter to Gandhiji's notice. He said that I could not do that. It would be violating a rule made by the Congress and the Spinners' Association and if I did it, the Ashram would not get the certificate of purity from the Spinners' Association for the khadi produced by it. But he added : "You have the right to revolt against this rule and bear the consequences and justify your revolt by results." I accepted his challenge and said that if the U.P. people did not believe an old servant of theirs for producing pure khadi, the Spinners' Association Certificate would not help me. I did what I considered right. After six months this condition about yarn was officially removed and I stood justified.

If adherence to truth and the supremacy of the moral law is modern, Gandhiji was modern. If keeping one's word and ful-

filling one's engagement is a sign of modernity, Gandhiji was modern. If personal cleanliness and that of one's surroundings are marks of modernity, surely Gandhiji was modern. If eating for the sake of not satisfying a sophisticated palate but for keeping one's body fit for work for the good of others is modern, then Gandhiji was modern. If recognition of the dignity of physical labour is a sign of modernity, Gandhiji was modern. If tolerance and good understanding are modern, Gandhiji must be considered modern. If feeling at home with those who differ from one or who are opponents is modern, Gandhiji was modern. If universal courtesy, without caring for position or power or wealth is modern, then surely Gandhiji was modern. If the democratic way of life is modern, Gandhiji was among the elect. If identification with the lowly and the lost is modern, then Gandhiji was modern. If untiring work for the poor, the needy, the downtrodden, the unfortunate, *daridranarayan* is modern, then Gandhiji was modern. If standing aloof in the midst of raging human passions is modern, then Gandhiji was modern. Above all, if dying for a noble cause is modern, then Gandhiji was modern.

If, however, the adoption of Western forms in dress, food, etc., is modern, then Gandhiji was surely not modern. If drinking and smoking, and the use of coffee and tea are signs of modernity, then Gandhiji was not modern. If dining in fashionable and costly hotels and restaurants and visiting pleasure-houses and night clubs is modern, surely Gandhiji was not modern. If wasting time in scandal-mongering and useless gossip is modern, then Gandhiji was not modern, as every minute of his waking hours was passed in serving the poor.

People have often talked of his loin cloth. Apart from his desire to identify himself with the masses of India, the loin cloth cannot but be considered as modern in these days of mini-skirts and mini-sarees and of topless dresses.

Words, if not properly used with reference to their content, must necessarily lead to irrational thought and wrong judgments. This would do injustice to those to whom these words are applied. I have written this because I have seen highly intelligent persons passing opinions on Gandhiji without caring to look carefully into the content of the epithets they apply to him.

The fact is that every son of a father is more modern than his parent. Likewise, every writer or artist living and working in recent times is more modern than the old masters. But the question is : Is he a writer or an artist at all? To call him modern gives no idea of his work. The word 'modern' without its content is merely a time judgment. It is not a quality or value judgment. Modernity is like fashion which is something fleeting and transitory. The latest fashion is for the hour. Modernity like fashion may pass even while we are writing or talking about it. Individuals and nations must order their lives by ideas and ideals which are more stable and permanent.

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# Gandhiji as World Citizen

We have said before that for Gandhiji non-violence was not merely a policy, but also his religion. It was a way of life. He followed it in thought, word and deed. For such a man, respect for all living creatures was natural. He often said that one who could not give back life had no right to take it. He believed that the violence of wild animals was generally due to their fear of man. If they had the confidence that man was their friend, they would not attack him. This is clear from the experience of those who train wild animals. That animals attack one another is a fact. But generally they do so for their food. In any case there is no organised war between one and another species of animals. War is basically a human phenomenon. Gandhiji's non-violence was often criticised, but no criticism could shake his faith. He considered human beings as one family, whatever their differences in sex, colour and race. He did not believe in the artificial differences between man and man, created by religion, caste, community and nation. He believed in the perfect equality of men. Any exploitation of man by man, or of group by group, was contrary to his faith in truth and non-violence.

Gandhiji, as we have indicated earlier, considered human life as one and not divided into airtight compartments. He held that the different facets of man's life could be co-ordinated by the application of moral law. He believed that "we are members one of another", as the Bible puts it. For him, therefore, there could be no conflict

between nation and nation that could not be resolved as in a family, without the use of violence. In his personal case, he sought no redress for wrongs done to him. Even when the wrong-doer was hauled up for injury done to him, he refused to bear witness against him.

Gandhiji strove to raise the status of his people in South Africa. He also worked for the freedom of his countrymen from a foreign yoke. However, this service of his people was not exclusive. His nationalism was not inconsistent with his love for humanity. Nationalism, as historically practised, has not only been exclusive, but in many cases expansionist. It has often believed in the morality of "my nation, right or wrong". Gandhiji's adherence to truth and non-violence precluded such a view. He considered nobody as an alien. Though he was working for his people in South Africa, he had friends among the whites some of whom helped him in the struggle against the injustice of their own community. Even when he was working for the independence of India, he had English friends who appreciated what he was doing for his people. This could not have been possible unless his foreign friends thought that his work was humanitarian, and not confined merely to his people. Those who helped him were themselves humanitarians. As such, they were against all injustice and tyranny wherever found.

Further, Gandhiji always made a distinction between a system or institution, and the individuals working under it. While a harmful system was to be reformed or destroyed, individuals working under it should not be made to suffer. They were to be won over by tolerance and love. After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Punjab brutalities, as we have seen, he only wanted that the chief perpetrators of that cruel deed should not be kept in service in India or allowed to draw their pensions from the Indian Exchequer.

When Gandhiji advocated the boycott of foreign cloth, many accused him of trying to starve the textile workers of Lancashire and their families. Gandhiji repudiated the charge. He said that the masses in India had every right to make their own cloth when they were free from agricultural operations. Nay, it was their duty to do so, and help themselves and their families by adding to the meagre income which left them half-starved. It was also the duty of their neighbours to purchase that cloth. That Gandhiji had no ill-will against the Lancashire labourers was witnessed

when he was invited by them, while he was in England attending the Second Round Table Conference. The labourers there were eager to understand his point of view.

The Swadeshi movement was often misunderstood and misrepresented as being selfish and exclusive. Gandhiji explained that swadeshi represented the service of humanity, through the service of one's neighbour whose needs required urgent attention. The man who loves humanity must begin his service somewhere. His neighbour, whose difficulties he can see and appreciate, must be his first concern. Charity must begin at home. But with Gandhiji it did not end there. Once a highly placed Englishman told Gandhiji that he, as an Indian, must naturally love his people more than the people of other lands. He thought Gandhiji's reply would be in the affirmative. But he was surprised when Gandhiji said : "I make absolutely no distinction between my countrymen and others. I love all mankind without distinction of caste, creed or nationality. If I serve my countrymen it is because this is easy for me. But my service is meant to put them on their own legs, so that they may help me in the service of humanity." On another occasion he said, "The individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world."

If anything, Gandhiji showed more consideration to people who differed from him, or who belonged to other faiths and nationalities. He held that the moral law required from individuals to be more exacting in the judgment on themselves and their own rather than others, even though they be opponents and enemies. This, as we have already observed, clearly came out in his last days, during the communal strife. He was more shocked by what the Hindus had done in Bihar, and he denounced their misbehaviour in stronger terms than he did in the case of the Muslims who had misbehaved similarly in East Bengal, the Punjab, the Frontier and Sind. His exhortations to keep the peace were more often addressed to the Hindus and the Sikhs than to the Muslims. He wanted those who were in a sense his own people to do the right thing, whatever the other communities may do. This attitude, as we know, cost him his life.

There have been throughout the ages many philosophers, intellectuals, scientists, artists and even politicians who feel and claim that they are the citizens of the world. In India Jawaharlal and his great critic Rammanohar Lohia and the Sarvodaya leaders and workers claimed to be the citizens of the world. The Sarvodaya workers even greet one another not by 'Jai Hind' but by 'Jai Jagat'. But there is a difference of approach and conception of Gandhiji's citizenship of the world, and the other mentioned here. Jawaharlal felt, and sometimes said, that he was at home neither in India nor in the West. In contrast to this, Gandhiji said that he would feel at home everywhere and that he could live even in a village in any part of the world engaged in improving its condition. This is because Gandhiji loved all humanity. His love was neither intellectual nor sentimental. It was based upon the fact that in his eyes there could be no bad men in the world who must be liquidated. All are the creatures of God, nay they participate in His divine nature, *Amsha Sanatana*. He also believed that sin is only a kind of psychological ailment. It can be cured through proper education and suitable social environment and by one's own efforts. He never thought that anybody was morally unreclaimable. Like all the great prophets and reformers he belonged to the whole of humanity. Though an extrovert, he found peace and comfort within himself. *Antahsukhah antararamah*. He was like the old banyan tree which took under its cool shade all life without destroying it.

Though a citizen of the world, he did not cease to be a nationalist. He knew that the citizens of a nation had many things in common; and one would find it convenient to serve the world through serving one's own nation, specially in bondage. Only a free nation could serve humanity, as long as the world was divided into separate entities. He loved his nation as he loved every other nation. By his spiritual and moral dialectics he synthesised the idea of nationalism with that of universalism. To do this, as we have said before, his service of India was for the purpose that free India may be able to render service to humanity. He went so far as to say that he would sacrifice India, if need be, for the good of the world. I wonder if others who claimed or claim to be the citizens of the world would go so far in their love of humanity !

# Appendices

# Appendix I

[ I returned from Europe in December 1927 and went straight to the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. A number of resolutions were passed there at my instance. This letter was written by Gandhiji because he did not approve of some of my activities at this session. ]

Satyagrahashram,
Sabarmati
January 4, 1928

NOT REVISED

My dear Jawaharlal,

I feel that you love me too well to resent what I am about to write. In any case I love you too well to restrain my pen when I feel I must write.

You are going too fast. You should have taken time to think and become acclimatized. Most of the resolutions you framed and got carried could have been delayed for one year. Your plunging into the 'republican army' was a hasty step. But I do not mind these acts of yours so much as I mind your encouraging mischief-makers and hooligans. I do not know whether you still believe in unadulterated non-violence. But even if you have altered your views you could not think that unlicensed and unbridled violence is going to deliver the country. If careful observation of the country in the light of your European experiences convinces you of the error of the current ways and means, by all means enforce your own views but do please form a disciplined party. You know

the Cawnpore experiences. In every struggle bands of men who would submit to discipline are needed. You seem to be overlooking this factor in being careless about your instruments.

If I can advise you, now that you are the working secretary of the I.N.C., it is your duty to devote your whole energy to the central resolution, i.e., Unity and the important but secondary resolution, i.e., boycott of the Simon Commission. The Unity resolution requires the use of all your great gifts of organisation and persuasion.

I have no time to elaborate my points but *verb sap.*

I hope Kamala is keeping as well as in Europe.

Yours
Bapu

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 55-56.]

# Appendix II

Allahabad,
January 11, 1928

My dear Bapuji,

The Working Committee is now meeting in Benares and so I cannot go to Bombay or Sabarmati for some time.

I am loath to inflict another letter on you so soon after my last but I am very much troubled by your criticisms of the Congress resolutions and I feel I must write to you again. You are always very careful with your words and your language is studiously restrained. It amazes me all the more to find you using language which appears to me wholly unjustified. You have condemned in general language the proceedings of the Subjects Committee and specially selected some resolutions for greater criticism and condemnation. May I point out that it is always unsafe to judge on hearsay evidence ? You were not present yourself and it is quite conceivable that the opinions you may have formed after a personal visit to the Subjects Committee may have been different. Yet you have chosen to condemn and judge unfavourably the whole Committee, or at any rate a great majority of it, simply basing your judgement on the impressions of a few persons. Do you think this is quite fair to the Committee or the Congress? You have referred to discipline and to the Working Committee as the National Cabinet. May I remind you that you are a member of the Working Committee and it is an extraordinary thing for a member on the morrow of the Congress to

criticize and run down the Congress and its principal resolutions? There has been a general chorus of congratulation on the success of the Madras Congress. This may be wrong or without sufficient basis but undoubtedly there was this general impression in the country and atmosphere counts for a great deal in all public work. And now most people who thought so feel a bit dazed at your criticisms and wonder if their previous enthusiasm was not overdone or mistaken.

You have described the Independence resolution as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed". I have already pointed out to you how the country has discussed and considered this question for years past, and how I have personally thought over it, discussed it, spoken about it in meetings, written about it and generally been full of it for the last five years or more. It seems to me that under the circumstances, no stretch of language can justify the use of the words "hastily conceived". As for "thoughtlessly passed", I wonder if you know that the resolution was discussed in the Subjects Committee for about three hours and more than a dozen speeches for and against were made. Ultimately, as you know, it was passed almost unanimously both in the Committee and the open Congress. Were all the people in the Committee and the Congress who voted for it "thoughtless"? Is this not rather a large assumption? And why should it not be said with greater truth that the small minority opposed to the resolution were mistaken? You mention that last year the resolution was rejected by the Committee. I do not know what inference you draw from this but to me it seems obvious that this can only mean that the Committee and the Congress have been eager to pass it in the past as in the present but refrained from doing so out of regard for you. I hope you will agree with me that it is not healthy politics for any organization to subordinate its own definite opinion on a public issue out of personal regard only.

I am not referring here to the merits of the resolution. But I shall only say this that after prolonged and careful thought a demand for independence and all that this implies has come to mean a very great deal for me and I attach more importance to it than to almost anything else. I have thought over every word you said the other day in Madras on this question and it has merely con-

firmed me in my opinion. But I doubt if anyone outside a small circle understands your position in regard to this. I am sure that none of the others—liberals, etc.—who want dominion status think in the same way with you. Yesterday Sir Ali Imam addressed a meeting here on the Simon boycott. I also spoke for a few minutes and like King Charles' head independence cropped up and I laid stress on it. After the meeting Ali Imam told me that I did well in laying stress on this ; he and his friends would probably come round to this position sooner or later but for the time being they had to be a little restrained as they wanted to carry many people with them. I am sure most liberals welcome the Independence resolution, whatever they may say about it, as they feel that it strengthens their position. But whether they like it or not, it passes my comprehension how a national organization can have as its ideal and goal dominion status. The very idea suffocates and strangles me.

I took no special interest in the resolution on the boycott of British goods chiefly because I felt that it would meet with your strong disapproval and the boycott could not succeed unless a more or less unanimous effort was made. But I have no doubt that it can be made into a partial success if there was some unanimity in our own ranks. You must have read about the wonderful effectiveness of the boycott in China. There was nothing special in China which we have not got and there is no fundamental reason why we cannot succeed where they succeeded. But granting that it is not likely to succeed, is it such a laughing matter after all? Has our boycott of foreign cloth by khaddar succeeded so remarkably? Has our spinning franchise succeeded? They have not but you do not hesitate to press them on the country and the Congress because you felt, and rightly, that they would be good for the nation even if they did not wholly succeed.

I remember how Kelkar, Aney and Co., even as members of the Working Committee, used to make fun of the Congress resolutions on khadi, and it is very painful for me to think that you are also ridiculing important Congress resolutions. The Kelkars and Aneys do not count and I do not care what they say or do. But I do care very much for what you say and do.

Having singled out two resolutions for your special condemna-

tion you casually refer to the others as "several irresponsible resolutions". Excepting the Unity resolution, every other resolution of the Congress may come under this heading. And so the labours of the 200 and odd persons in the Subjects Committee and the larger number in the Congress are summarily and rather contemptuously disposed of. It is very hard luck on the unhappy persons who, though wanting perhaps in foresight and intelligence, did not spare themselves and tried to do their best. We have all sunk to the level of the schoolboys' 'debating society' and you chastise us like an angry schoolmaster, but a schoolmaster who will not guide us or give us lessons but will only point out from time to time the error of our ways. Personally, I very much wish that we were more like real schoolboys, with the life and energy and daring of schoolboys, and a little less like the right honourable and honourable gentlemen who are for ever weighing the pros and cons and counting the cost.

You know how intensely I have admired you and believed in you as a leader who can lead this country to victory and freedom. I have done so in spite of the fact that I hardly agreed with anything that some of your previous publications—*Indian Home Rule*, etc.,—contained. I felt and feel that you were and are infinitely greater than your little books. Above everything I admire action and daring and courage and I found them all in you in a superlative degree. And I felt instinctively that however much I may disagree with you, your great personality and your possession of these qualities would carry us to our goal. During the N.C.O. period you were supreme; you were in your element and automatically you took the right step. But since you came out of prison, something seems to have gone wrong and you have been very obviously ill at ease. You will remember how within a few months or even weeks you repeatedly changed your attitude—the Juhu statements, the A.I.C.C. meeting at Ahmedabad and after, etc.—and most of us were left in utter bewilderment. That bewilderment has continued since then. I have asked you many times what you expected to do in the future and your answers have been far from satisfying. All you have said has been that within a year or eighteen months you expected the khadi movement to spread rapidly and in a geometric ratio and then some direct action in the political field might

be indulged in. Several years and eighteen months have passed since then and the miracle has not happened. It was difficult to believe that it would happen but faith in your amazing capacity to bring off the improbable kept us in an expectant mood. But such faith for an irreligious person like me is a poor reed to rely on and I am beginning to think if we are to wait for freedom till khadi becomes universal in India, we shall have to wait till the Greek Kalends. Khadi will grow slowly, and if war comes, it will grow very fast, but I do not see how freedom is coming in its train. As I men ioned before you, our khadi work is almost wholly divorced from politics and our khadi workers are developing a mentality which does not concern itself with anything outside their limited sphere of work. This may be good for the work they do, but little can be expected from them in the political field.

What then can be done ? You say nothing—you only criticize and no helpful lead comes from you. You tell us that if the country will not even take to khadi, how can we expect it to do anything more difficult or daring ? I do not think the reasoning is correct. If the country does not go ahead politically by one method, surely it is up to our leaders to think of other or additional methods.

Reading many of your articles in *Young India*—your autobiography, etc.,—I have often felt how very different my ideals were from yours. And I have felt that you were very hasty in your judgements, or rather having arrived at certain conclusions you were over-eager to justify them by any scrap of evidence you might get. I remember how in an article on the "Two Ways" or some such title—you gave some newspaper cuttings from America about crimes and immorality and contrasted American civilization with Indian. I felt it was something like Katherine Mayo drawing conclusions from some unsavoury hospital statistics. Your long series of articles based on the French book—"Towards Moral Bankruptcy"—also made me feel the same way. You misjudge greatly, I think, the civilization of the West and attach too great an importance to its many failings. You have stated somewhere that India has nothing to learn from the West and that she had reached a pinnacle of wisdom in the past. I certainly disagree with this viewpoint and I neither think that the so-called Rama Raj was very good in the past, nor do I want it back. I think that Western or rather

industrial civilization is bound to conquer India, maybe with many changes and adaptations, but none the less, in the main, based on industrialism. You have criticised strongly the many obvious defects of industrialism and hardly paid any attention to its merits. Everybody knows these defects and the utopias and social theories are meant to remove them. It is the opinion of most thinkers in the West that these defects are not due to industrialism as such but to the capitalist system which is based on exploitation of others. I believe you have stated that in your opinion there is no necessary conflict between capital and labour. I think that under the capitalist system, this conflict is unavoidable.

You have advocated very eloquently and forcefully the claims of the daridranarayana—the poor in India. I do believe that the remedy you have suggested is very helpful to them and if adopted by them in large numbers will relieve to some extent their misery. But I doubt very much if the fundamental causes of poverty are touched by it. You do not say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India or against the capitalist exploitation of both the workers and the consumers.

But I must stop. I have already exceeded all reasonable limits and I hope you will forgive me. My only excuse is my mental agitation. I did not want to become the secretary of the A. I. C. C. as I wanted perfect freedom to say and do what I considered necessary. But Ansari pressed me on the ground that many of my resolutions, and specially the Independence resolution, had been passed by the Congress and I thus had full freedom to work on my own lines. I could not answer this argument and had to accept. Now I find that every effort is being made to belittle and ridicule these very Congress resolutions and it is a painful experience.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

[From a photostat (Original in Nehru's hand)]

# Appendix III

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
January 17, 1928

My dear Jawaharlal,

I must dictate and save time and give rest to my aching shoulder. I wrote to you on Sunday about Fenner Brockway. I hope you got that letter in due time.

Do you know that it was because you were the chief partner in the transactions referred to that I wrote the articles you have criticized, except of course about the so-called 'All India Exhibition'? I felt a kind of safety that in view of the relations between you and me, my writings would be taken in the spirit in which they were written. However I see that they were a mis-fire all round. I do not mind it. For, it is evident that the articles alone could deliver you from the self-suppression under which you have been labouring apparently for so many years. Though I was beginning to detect some differences in viewpoint between you and me, I had no notion whatsoever of the terrible extent of these differences. Whilst you were heroically suppressing yourself for the sake of the nation and in the belief that by working with and under me in spite of yourself, you would serve the nation and come out scatheless, you were chafing under the burden of this unnatural self-suppression. And, while you were in that state, you overlooked the very things which appear to you now as my serious blemishes. I could show you

from the pages of *Young India* equally strong articles written by me, when I was actively guiding the C., with reference to the doings of the All India Congress Committee. I have spoken similarly at the All India Congress Committee meetings whenever there has been irresponsible and hasty talk or action. But whilst you were under stupefaction, these things did not jar on you as they do now. And it seems to me therefore useless to show you the discrepancies in your letter. What I am now concerned with is future action.

If any freedom is required from me I give you all the freedom you may need from the humble, unquestioning allegiance that you have given to me for all these years and which I value all the more for the knowledge I have now gained of your state. I see quite clearly that you must carry on open warfare against me and my views. For, if I am wrong I am evidently doing irreparable harm to the country and it is your duty after having known it to rise in revolt against me. Or, if you have any doubt as to the correctness of your conclusions, I shall gladly discuss them with you personally. The differences between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting-ground between us. I can't conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and so honest as you have always been; but in serving a cause, comradeships have got to be sacrificed. The cause must be held superior to all such considerations. But this dissolution of comradeship—if dissolution must come—in no way affects our personal intimacy. We have long become members of the same family, and we remain such in spite of grave political differences. I have the good fortune to enjoy such relations with several people. To take Sastri, for instance, he and I differ in the political outlook as poles asunder, but the bond between him and me that sprung up before we knew the political differences has persisted and survived the fiery ordeals it had to go through.

I suggest a dignified way of unfurling your banner. Write to me a letter for publication showing your differences. I will print it in *Young India* and write a brief reply. Your first letter I destroyed after reading and replying to it, the second I am keeping, and if you do not want to take the trouble of writing another letter, I am prepared to publish the letter that is before me. I am not aware of any offensive passage in it. But if I find any, you may

depend upon my removing every such passage. I consider that letter to be a frank and honest document.

With love
Bapu

[ *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 56-58. ]

# Appendix IV

My dear Bapu,

In our recent conversations you will remember that I laid stress on the reiteration and clearer definition of our national objective. The objective of political independence has been finally laid down by the Congress and there is nothing to add to it or take away from it. We stand for complete independence. Sometimes a little confusion arises because of vague phraseology and misleading propaganda and it is therefore as well to remove this confusion by a reiteration of our political demands. Even the word 'independence' is used with a variety of meanings. Obviously it must include, as the Congress has clearly and definitely laid down, full control of the Army and of foreign relations, as well as financial control.

In regard to economic matters, the Karachi Congress by passing the important resolution on 'Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes' gave a lead and pointed out the direction in which we would move. I attach great importance to that resolution but I would personally like to go much further and to clarify the position still more.

It seems to me that if we are to improve the condition of the masses, to raise them economically and give them freedom, it is inevitable that vested interests in India will have to give up their special position and many of their privileges. It is inconceivable

to me how else the masses can rise. Therefore, the problem of achieving freedom becomes one of revising vested interests in favour of the masses. To the extent this is done, to that extent only will freedom come. The biggest vested interest in India is that of the British Government ; next come the Indian Princes, and others follow. We do not wish to injure any class or group and the de-vesting should be done as gently as possible and with every effort to avoid injury. But it is obvious that the de-vesting is bound to cause loss to the classes or groups which enjoy special privileges at the expense of the masses. It is also obvious that the process of de-vesting must be as speedy as possible to bring relief to the masses whose condition, as you know, is as bad as it can well be. Indeed economic forces themselves are acting with amazing rapidity today and breaking up the old order. The big zamindari and taluqdari system in the United Provinces has largely collapsed, though it may be kept up for some time longer by outside agencies. Even the condition of the zamindars is very bad and the peasantry of course are in a far worse position.

We are all agreed that the Round Table Conference and its various productions are utterly useless to solve even one of India's many problems. As I conceive it, the Round Table Conference was an effort to consolidate the vested interests of India behind the British Government so as to face the rising and powerful national and economic movements in the country which threaten these interests. Essentially, in international parlance, it was a fascist grouping of vested and possessing interests, and fascist methods were adopted in India to suppress the national movement. And because the mere preservation of all these vested interests in India cannot possibly solve our economic ills, whether those of the masses or even of the middle classes, the effort is foredoomed to inevitable failure. Even from the point of view of a democratic nationalism, as you yourself stated at the Round Table Conference, democracy and autocracy can ill go together.

Another aspect has to be borne in mind. The problem of Indian freedom cannot be separated from the vital international problems of the world. The present crisis in the world's affair's is having its repercussions in India. At any moment it may result in a complete breakdown or in a violent international conflagration.

Everywhere there is a conflict and contest between the forces of progress and betterment of the masses and the forces of reaction and vested interests. We cannot remain silent witnesses to this titanic struggle for it affects us intimately. Both on the narrower ground of our own interests and the wider ground of international welfare and human progress, we must, I feel, range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world. This ranging of ourselves at present can of course be ideological only.

These are some of the larger issues that fill my mind and I am convinced, not only that we ignore them at our peril, but that a true appreciation of them will vitalize and give new meaning to our struggle for freedom which we must continue till the full objective is achieved.

These wider issues are of great importance but at present, as you know, the minds of large numbers of our countrymen are greatly exercised over immediate national problems and especially the question of carrying on the struggle. The statements that you and Sjt. M. S. Aney issued sometime ago to guide the country have, I am afraid, produced some confusion and there has even been some resentment in regard to particular directions contained in them. There is a vague talk, in quarters which ought to know better, that the Congress has been dissolved. It is obvious that nothing of the kind has been done or could be done under the constitution. Your directions and those of Mr. Aney were, I take it, in the nature of advice or suggestions to meet a certain position that had arisen. The Congress continues as before but it is clear that it cannot function normally when Government declare its committees to be illegal. There can be no regular offices or open activity. To recognise this fact and to adapt ourselves to it is not to wind up any Congress Committee, much less the Congress organisation as a whole.

A necessary consequence from this was to avoid the possibility of a few new comers who formed committees, when the old members and other reliable workers went to prison, or even individuals, committing the Congress to an undesirable course of action. As is known, we have had to face this risk in the past and unreliable persons have come to the helm of affairs in some local areas with the intention of obstructing and even stopping the very activities they were supposed to further. It thus becomes desirable to prevent such unreliable persons from exploiting the name of the Congress Com-

mittee. This of course does not prevent Congress workers in any area from co-operating together in an organised way for the furtherance of our programme.

Confusion has also arisen in the country about the implications of individual and mass civil disobedience. I appreciate to some extent the difference but this difference does not appear to me to be a fundamental one, as, in any event, civil disobedience is essentially an individual affair. Individual civil disobedience can develop into mass civil disobedience. Besides, you told me that if an organisation felt strong enough to undertake the responsibility and the risk, it could, of its own initiative, take up mass civil disobedience. Indeed you were of opinion that a local organisation could, in this manner, go ahead in any direction which was not contrary to Congress methods or policy.

Stress was laid in your previous statement on the undesirability of secrecy, although you pointed out that there was nothing inherently illegitimate in secret methods. I think that most of us agree, and certainly I am of that opinion, that our movement is essentially an open one and secret methods do not fit in with it. Such methods, if indulged in to any large extent, are likely to change the whole character of the movement, as it has been conceived, and produce a certain amount of demoralisation. Agreeing with this, some of us feel that, to some extent, as for instance, in communicating with each other or sending directions or keeping contacts, a measure of secrecy may be necessary. Perhaps secrecy is hardly the word for these activities and privacy would suit them better. Privacy of course is always open to all groups and individuals. Secrecy, or the avoidance of it, as you said, cannot be made into a fetish.

But secrecy is certainly involved in the production of printed or duplicated news sheets and bulletins. These bulletins have often served a useful purpose in the past in keeping contact between headquarters and districts and in sending information or directions. You pointed out to me the difficulties and undesirable consequences of running these secret presses and duplicating machines. Many good workers are tied up and have to avoid aggressive action; money has to be invested in such machines and frequently they are taken away by the police. Even from the practical point of view, this continuous drain and tying up of workers is not desirable, and un-

doubtedly it sometimes results in demoralisation. You suggested that the best way was to have hand-written copies of bulletins, etc., containing the name of the publisher. Generally, I agree with all this and appreciate the force of your argument. But I do feel that under certain circumstances it may be desirable for a local or provincial committee or group to issue bulletins of directions, etc., secretly. This must not be encouraged; indeed it should be discouraged, but a certain latitude in exceptional circumstances might be permitted.

There is one other small matter which seems to me rather ridiculous. It was right and proper, if I may say so, for you to court imprisonment by giving previous intimation of your intention to do so to the authorities. But it seems to me to be perfectly absurd for others, and even Congress volunteers, to send such notices or communications to the authorities. Any person desiring to offer civil resistance should openly carry on activities which further our cause and thus court arrest. He must not forget or ignore these activities and merely ask to be arrested.

This letter has become long enough. I do not mention here the many other matters which I had the privilege of discussing with you.

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

Parnakuti
Poona, September 13th, 1933

Mahatma Gandhi, Poona.

[Bombay Secret Abstracts : H.D. Sp. Branch File No. 800(40)(11)-C]

# Appendix V

"Parnakuti",
Poona, September 14, 1933

My dear Jawaharlal,

I am glad you have written so fully and frankly.

When, on my return from London at the end of 1931, I found you to have been suddenly snatched away from me, I felt the separation keenly. I was, therefore, most anxious to meet you and exchange views.

With much of what you have said in your letter I am in complete agreement. The experience gained after the Karachi Congress has, if possible, strengthened my faith in the main resolution and the economic programme referred to by you. I have no doubt in my mind that our goal can be no less than "Complete Independence". I am also in whole-hearted agreement with you when you say that without a material revision of vested interests, the condition of the masses can never be improved. I believe too, though I may not go as far as you do, that before India can become one homogeneous entity, the princes will have to part with much of their power and become popular representatives of the people over whom they are ruling today. I can corroborate from first-hand experience much of what you say about the Round Table Conference. Nor have I the slightest difficulty in agreeing with you that in these days of rapid intercommunication and a growing consciousness of the oneness of all mankind, we must recognise that our nationalism must

not be inconsistent with progressive internationalism. India cannot stand in isolation and unaffected by what is going on in other parts of the world. I can, therefore, go the whole length with you and say that 'we should range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world'. But I know that though there is such an agreement between you and me in the enunciation of ideals, there are temperamental differences between us. Thus you have emphasised the necessity of a clear statement of the goal, but having once determined it, I have never attached importance to the repetition. The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilise the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know that if we can take care of them, attainment of the goal is assured. I feel too that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means. If we can give an ocular demonstration of our uttermost truthfulness and non-violence, I am convinced that our statement of the national goal cannot long offend the interests which your letter would appear to attack. We know that the princes, the zamindars, and those, who depend for their existence upon the exploitation of the masses, would cease to fear and distrust us, if we could but ensure the innocence of our methods. We do not seek to coerce any. We seek to convert them. This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest.

In the main I agree with your interpretation of Sjt. Aney's instructions and my note upon them. I am quite clear in my mind that had these instructions not been issued, the whole movement of civil resistance would have collapsed through growing internal weakness; for Congressmen were deluding themselves into the belief that there were organisations effectively functioning to which they could look for guidance, when, as a matter of fact, under the organised terrorism, which the Ordinance rule means, organised functioning of Congress Committees had become impossible. A false belief in the functioning of organisations rendered illegal and largely impotent was fast producing a demoralisation which had to be arrested. There is no such thing as demoralisation in civil resistance properly applied. You have said rightly that after all "civil disobedience is essentially an individual affair". I go a step

further and say that so long as there is one civil resister offering resistance, the movement cannot die and must succeed in the end. Individual civil resisters do not need the aid of an organisation. After all, an organisation is nothing without the individuals composing it. Sjt. Aney's instructions were, therefore, I hold, an effective answer to the Ordinances and if only men and women belonging to the Congress will appreciate the necessity of those instructions with all their implications, the Ordinances will be rendered nugatory at least so far as the resisters are concerned. They can form a nucleus around which an army of invincible civil resisters can be built up. Nothing in Sjt. Aney's instructions or in my note would warrant the supposition that they preclude organised action by Congressmen in any shape or form.

I would like to warn you against thinking that there is no fundamental difference between individual civil resistance and mass civil resistance. I think that the fundamental difference is implied in your own admission that "it is essentially an individual affair". The ehief distinction between mass civil resistance and individual civil resistance is that in the latter everyone is a complete independent unit and his fall does not affect the others: in mass civil resistance the fall of one generally adversely affects the rest. Again, in mass civil resistance leadership is essential, in individual civil resistance every resister is his own leader. Then again, in mass civil resistance there is a possibility of failure, in individual civil resistance failure is an impossibility. Finally, a State may cope with mass civil resistance; no State has yet been found able to cope with individual civil resistance.

Nor may much be made of my statement that an organisation which feels its own strength can at its own risk adopt mass civil resistance. While, as an opinion, it is unexceptionable, I know that at the present moment there is no organisation that can shoulder the burden. I do not want to raise false hopes.

Now about secret methods. I am as firm as ever that they must be tabooed. I am myself unable to make any exceptions. Secrecy has caused much mischief and if it is not put down with a firm hand, it may ruin the movement. There may be exceptional circumstances that may warrant secret methods. I would forego that advantage for the sake of the masses whom we want to educate in fearlessness.

I will not confuse their minds by leading them to think that under certain circumstances they may resort to secret methods. Secrecy is inimical to the growth of the spirit of civil resistance. If Congressmen will realise that all property is liable to be confiscated at any moment, they will learn to be utterly independent of it.

I quite agree with you that it is ludicrous for individuals to send notices to the local authorities of their intention to offer the particular form of civil disobedience. We do not want to make a great movement ridiculous. Therefore, when civil resistance is offered it should be offered seriously and in an effective manner, in so far as this is possible, in furtherance of the Congress programme.

I notice one gap in your letter. You make no mention of the various constructive activities of the Congress. They became an integral part of the Congress programme that was framed after mature deliberations in 1920. With civil resistance as the background, we cannot possibly do without the constructive activities such as communal unity, removal of untouchability and universalisation of the spinning-wheel and khaddar. I am as strong as ever about these. We must recognise that whilst Congressmen can be counted by hundreds of thousands, civil resisters imprisoned have never amounted to more than one lakh at the outside. I feel that there is something radically wrong if paralysis has overtaken the remaining lakhs. There is nothing to be ashamed of in an open confession by those who for any reason whatsoever are unable to join the civil resisters' ranks. They are also serving the cause of the country and bringing it nearer to the goal who are engaged in any of the constructive activities I have named and several other kindred activities I can add to the list. Ordinance or no Ordinance, if individual Congressman and Congresswoman will learn the art of contributing their share to the work of building up the house of independence and realise their own importance, dark as the horizon seems to us, there is absolutely no cause for despair or disappointment.

Finally, if I can say so without incurring the risk of your accusing me of egotism, I would like to say that I have no sense of defeat in me and the hope in me that this country of ours is fast marching towards its goal is burning as bright as it did in 1920; for I have an undying faith in the efficacy of civil resistance. As you are aware,

after full and prayerful consideration I have decided not to take the offensive during the unexpired period of the sentence of imprisonment that was pronounced against me on the 4th of August last by the court that met in Yeravda jail. I need not go into the reasons as I have already issued a separate statement about it. This personal suspension, although it may be misunderstood for a while, will show how and when it may become a duty. And if it is a duty, it cannot possibly injure the cause.

Yours
Bapu

Jawaharlal Nehru,
Poona.

[ Bombay Secret Abstracts: H.D. Sp. Branch File No. 800 (40) (14). ]

# Appendix VI

[I was suddenly released from prison because of my wife's serious illness. The release was temporary and in fact I was taken back to prison within ten days. I wrote this letter to Gandhiji immediately after my release.]

Anand Bhawan,
Allahabad,
August 13, 1934

My dear Bapu,

...After just six months of absolute seclusion and little exercise I have felt rather lost in the anxiety, excitement and activity of the past 27 hours. I feel very tired. I am writing this letter to you at midnight. All day there have been crowds of people coming. If I have the chance I shall write to you again, but I doubt if I shall be able to do so for some months. I am, therefore, going to indicate to you briefly how I have reacted to the various major Congress decisions of the last five months or so. My sources of information have naturally been strictly limited but I think that they were sufficient to enable me to form a fairly correct idea of the general trend of events.

When I heard that you had called off the C.D. movement I felt unhappy. Only the brief announcement reached me at first. Much later I read your statement and this gave me one of the biggest shocks I have ever had. I was prepared to reconcile myself to the withdrawal of C.D. But the reasons you gave for doing so and the

suggestions you made for future work astounded me. I had a sudden and intense feeling, that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world. I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up. But a few bonds strengthened me, a few strong supports held me up. That loneliness never went, but it was lessened. But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island.

Human beings have an enormous capacity for adapting themselves and so I too adapted myself to some extent to the new conditions. The keenness of my feelings on the subject, which amounted almost to physical pain, passed off; the edge was dulled. But shock after shock, a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point, and allowed my mind or feelings no peace or rest. Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only with the crowds that passed me, but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close comrades. My stay in prison this time became a greater ordeal for my nerves than any previous visit had been. I almost wished that all newspapers might be kept away from me so that I might be spared these repeated shocks.

Physically I kept fairly well. I always do in prison. My body has served me well and can stand a great deal of ill-treatment and strain. And being vain enough to imagine that perhaps I might yet do some effective work in this land to which fate had tied me, I looked after it well.

But I wondered often enough if I was not a square peg in a round hole, or a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean which spurned me. But vanity and conceit triumphed and the intellectual apparatus that functions within me refused to admit defeat. If the ideals that had spurred me to action and had kept me buoyed up through stormy weather were right—and the conviction of their rightness ever grew within me—they were bound to triumph though my generation might not live to witness that triumph.

But what had happened to those ideals during these long and weary months of this year when I was a silent and distant witness, fretting at my helplessness? Setbacks and temporary defeats are common enough in all great struggles. They grieve but one recovers

soon enough. One recovers soon if the light of those ideals is not allowed to grow dim and the anchor of principles holds fast. But what I saw was not setback and defeat but that spiritual defeat which is the most terrible of all. Do not imagine that I am referring to the council entry question. I do not attach vital importance to it. Under certain circumstances I can even imagine entering a legislature myself. But whether I function inside or outside the legislature, I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for the fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other changes can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world.

So I thought. Not so evidently the leaders who were functioning outside. They began to talk the language of an age gone by before the heady wine of N.C.O. and C.D. had fired our heads. Sometimes they used the same words and phrases but they were dead words without life or real meaning. The leading figures of the Congress suddenly became those people who had obstructed us, held us back, kept aloof from the struggle and even co-operated with the opposite party in the time of our direst need. They became the high priests in our temple of freedom and many a brave soldier who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray was not even allowed inside the temple precincts. He and many like him had become untouchables and unapproachables. And if he ventured to raise his voice and criticise the new high priests, he was shouted down and told that he was a traitor to the cause because he spoilt the harmony of the sacred precincts.

And so the flag of Indian freedom was entrusted with all pomp and circumstance to those who had actually hauled it down at the height of our national struggle at the bidding of the enemy; to those who had proclaimed from the house-tops that they had given up politics—for politics were unsafe then—but who emerged with a jump to the front ranks when politics became safe.

And what of the ideals they set forth before them, speaking as they did on behalf of the Congress and the nation? A pitiful hotch-potch, avoiding real issues, toning down, as far as they dared, even the political objective of the Congress, expressing a tender solicitude for every vested interest, bowing down to many a declared enemy of freedom, but showing great truculence and courage in facing the advanced and fighting elements in the Congress ranks.

Is not the Congress being rapidly reduced to a magnified edition of that shameful spectacle, the Calcutta Corporation during the last few years ? Might not the dominant part of the Bengal Congress be called today "the society for the advancement of Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sirkar", a gentleman who rejoiced to entertain Government officials, Home Members and the like, when most of us were in prison and C.D. was supposed to be flourishing? And the other part probably a similar society for a similar laudable object ? But the fault does not lie with Bengal alone. Almost everywhere there is a similar outlook. The Congress from top to bottom is a caucus and opportunism triumphs.

The Working Committee is not directly responsible for this state of affairs. But none the less the Working Committee must shoulder the responsibility. It is the leaders and their policy that shape the activities of the followers. It is neither fair nor just to throw blame on the followers. Every language has some saying about the workman blaming his tools. The committee had deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives and this is bound to lead not only to confusion but to demoralization during periods of reaction, and to the emergence of the demagogue and the reactionary.

I am referring especially to the political objectives which are the special province of the Congress. I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognise that education on these issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go as far at present as I would like it to. But it appears that whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not, it is perfectly willing to denounce and to excommunicate people who happen to have made a special study of the subject and hold certain views. No attempt is made to understand those views, which it is notorious are held by a very large number of the ablest and most self-sacrificing people in the world. Those views may be right or wrong but they deserve at least some understanding before the Working Committee sets out to denounce them. It is hardly becoming for a reasoned argument to be answered by sentimental appeals or by the cheap remark that the conditions in India are different and the economic laws that apply elsewhere do not function here. The resolution of the Working

Committee on the subject showed such an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the over-mastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.

A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.

This letter has become a much longer one than I expected and the night is already far spent. Probably I have written in a confused and scrappy way for my brain is tired. But still it will convey some picture of my mind. The last few months have been very painful ones for me and I take it for many others. I have felt sometimes that in the modern world, and perhaps in the ancient world also, it is oft preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity....

There is one other subject I should like to mention. That is the Swaraj Bhawan Trust. I understand that the Working Committee recently considered the question of the upkeep of the Swaraj Bhawan and came to the conclusion that it was not responsible for it. As however it had already made a grant about three years ago and this had not been paid yet, although expenses were incurred on the strength of it, a fresh grant was sanctioned. This will probably be enough for some months. In regard to the future, the Working Committee was evidently anxious not to be saddled with the burden of maintaining the house and grounds. This burden amounts to Rs. 100 a month, which includes taxes, etc. The trustees, I understand, were also a little frightened of the burden and suggested that parts of the house might be let in the ordinary way to raise money for the maintenance. Another suggestion was made that part of the grounds might be sold off for this purpose. I was surprised to learn of these suggestions, as some of them seemed to me to be contrary to the letter of the trust and all of them against its spirit. As an individual

trustee I have only one voice in the matter but I should like to say that I have the strongest possible objection to any such misuse of the trust property. The very idea of the wishes of my father being flouted in this way is intolerable to me. The trust represented not only his wishes but also in a small way a memorial to him and his wishes and his memory is dearer to me than a hundred rupees a month. I should, therefore, like to assure the Working Committee and the trustees that they need have no anxiety on the score of the money required for maintenance of the property. As soon as the funds, now granted by the Working Committee for some months, are exhausted, I shall make myself personally responsible for the maintenance and no further grant need be made by the Working Committee. I would also beg the trustees to respect my feelings in this matter and not to break up the property or to hire it for the sake of hiring it out. I shall endeavour to maintain the Swaraj Bhawan property till such time as it is put to some worthy use.

I have not the figures by me but I believe that even thus far the Swaraj Bhawan has not been, in any sense, a financial burden on the Working Committee. The grants that have been paid to it will probably not be much in excess of reasonable rent for the quarters occupied by the office of the A.I.C.C. This rent could have been reduced by occupying smaller and cheaper quarters. At the same time in the past the A.I.C.C. has paid as much as Rs. 150 a month for rent of an upper floor only in Madras.

Perhaps some parts of this letter might pain you. But you would not have me hide my heart from you.

Yours affectionately,

Jawahar

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 112-17.]

# Appendix VII

August 17, 1934

My dear Jawaharlal,

Your passionate and touching letter deserves a much longer reply than my strength will permit.

I had expected fuller grace from the Government. However your presence has done for Kamala and incidentally for Mama what no drugs or doctors could have done. I hope that you will be allowed to remain longer than the very few days you expect.

I understand your deep sorrow. You are quite right in giving full and free expression to your feelings. But I am quite sure that from our common standpoint a closer study of the written word will show you that there is not enough reason for all the grief and disappointment you have felt. Let me assure you that you have not lost a comrade in me. I am the same as you knew me in 1917 and after. I have the same passion that you knew me to possess for the common goal. I want complete independence for the country in the full English sense of the term. And every resolution that has pained you has been framed wth that end in view. I must take full responsibility for the resolutions and the whole conception surrounding them.

But I fancy that I have the knack for knowing the need of the time. And the resolutions are a response thereto. Of course here comes in the difference of our emphasis on the method or the means which to me are just as important as the goal and in a sense more

important in that we have some control over them, whereas we have none over the goal if we lose control over the means.

Do read the resolution about 'loose talk' dispassionately. There is not a word in it about socialism. Greatest consideration has been paid to the socialists some of whom I know so intimately. Do I not know their sacrifice? But I have found them as a body to be in a hurry. Why should they not be ? Only if I cannot march quite as quick, I must ask them to halt and take me along with them. That is literally my attitude. I have looked up the dictionary meaning of socialism. It takes me no further than where I was before I read the definition. What will you have me to read to know its full content? I have read one of the books Masani gave me and now I am devoting all my spare time to reading the book recommended by Narendradev.

You are hard on the members of the Working Committee. They are our colleagues such as they are. After all we are a free institution. They must be displaced, if they do not deserve confidence. But it is wrong to blame them for their inability to undergo the sufferings that some others have gone through.

After the explosion I want construction. Therefore now, lest we do not meet, tell me exactly what you will have me to do and who you think will best represent your views.

As to the trust, I was not present. Vallabhbhai was. Your attitude betrays anger. You should trust the trustees to do their duty. I did not think there was anything wrong. I was too preoccupied to concentrate on it. I shall now study the papers and everything. Of course your feelings will be fully respected by the other trustees. Having given you this assurance, I would ask you not to take this matter so personally as you have done. It more becomes your generous nature to give the same credit to your co-trustees for regard for Father's memory that you would take for yourself. Let the nation be the custodian of Father's memory and you only as one of the nation.

I hope Indu is well and likes her new life. And what about Krishna ?

Love

[ A Bunch of Old Letters, pp. 117-19 ] Bapu

# Appendix VIII

Wardha,
June 29, 1936

Dear Jawaharlalji,

When you appointed us members of the Working Committee after the Lucknow Congress in spite of known differences of opinion and outlook, we hoped it would be possible to evolve a common line of action and to work jointly keeping in the background the differences and concentrating on the points of agreement. We have been trying our best to accommodate ourselves but unfortunately we find that it has not been possible to secure an adjustment that can enable the two differing elements to work harmoniously or speak with one voice. We feel that the preaching and emphasising of socialism particularly at this stage by the President and other socialist members of the Working Committee while the Congress has not adopted it is prejudicial to the best interests of the country and to the success of the national struggle for freedom which we all hold to be the first and paramount concern of the country. You also appear to feel and have even expressed that the Working Committee as it is constituted is not of your choice but forced on you and that you accepted it against your own better judgment. Our own impression of the events at Lucknow is contrary to yours. We are wholly unaware of the slightest pressure being put upon [you] by any of us. Anyway the position created by your declarations is highly unsatisfactory and we think we should give you the

fullest latitude to work without feeling hampered in any way by the presence of colleagues in the Working Committee whom you regard as a drag. We feel on the other hand that the Congress should still follow the ideals, and the line of action and policy which it has been following since 1920 and which we consider to be best suited to our country particularly in the present conditions and which have already shown great results. We are of opinion that through your speeches and those of the other socialist colleagues and the acts of other socialists who have been emboldened by the speeches we have referred to the Congress organisation has been weakened throughout the country without any compensating gain. The effect of your propaganda on the political work immediately before the nation, particularly the programme of election, has been very harmful and we feel that in the situation created we cannot shoulder the responsibility of organising and fighting the coming elections.

It is not without much reluctance that we have, therefore, decided to tender our resignation from the Working Committee. We think that the step we have decided upon after much deliberation is just to you and to ourselves and in the best interest of the country as we see it.

Yours sincerely,

Rajendra Prasad
C. Rajagopalachari
Jairamdas Doulatram
Jamnalal Bajaj
Vallabhbhai Patel
J. B. Kripalani
S. D. Dev

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 182-85.]

# Appendix IX

Wardha,
July 1, 1936

My dear Jawaharlalji,

Since we parted yesterday we have had a long conversation with Mahatmaji and a prolonged consultation among ourselves. We understand that you have felt much hurt by the course of action taken by us and particularly the tone of our letter has caused you much pain. It was never our intention either to embarrass you or to hurt you and if you had suggested or indicated that it hurt you, we would have without the least hesitation amended or altered the letter. But we have decided to withdraw it and our resignation on a reconsideration of the whole situation.

Since we are withdrawing the resignation you will permit us to make it clear in this private communication with a somewhat greater elaboration our feelings than could be done in a letter which was bound to find publication. In doing so there is nothing further from our mind than to hurt you.

We have felt that in all your utterances as published in the Press you have been speaking not so much on the general Congress programme as on a topic which has not been accepted by the Congress and in doing so you have been acting more as the mouthpiece of the minority of our colleagues on the Working Committee as also on the Congress than as the mouthpiece of the majority which we expected you as Congress President to do. It may be, as

you tell us, that only that portion of your speeches is published which deals with socialism and the rest is not given prominence in the Press as it is supposed to have less news value. We must however remember that for one person who actually listens to your spoken word there are hundreds who read only the published report in the Press and you may not ignore the effect on this larger audience of your speeches.

There is a regular continuous campaign against us treating us as persons whose time is over, who represent and stand for ideas that are worn out and that have no present value, who are only obstructing the progress of the country and who deserve to be cast out of the position which they undeservedly hold. The very ideals, methods of work and tactics which we have learnt in company with Gandhiji forbid any scramble for power in any organisation and we have felt that a great injustice has been and is being done to us by others and we are not receiving the protection we are entitled to from you as our colleague and as our President. When elaborate preparations are being made to oust us and declarations to that effect are made in your presence and it is stated that your sympathies are with such groups as was done at the Trade Union Congress, we feel that what is stated represents the feeling not only of those who speak in those terms but also to some extent your own opinion. This hurts us as we have not the least desire to stick to any position. We have been led step by step to think that as colleagues we do not enjoy your confidence to the extent we ought to and that you have no respect left for us or our views. We have naturally felt from all this that you regard us as a drag and it serves no useful purpose to occupy such a position.

Your speech at the women's meeting in Bombay touched many of us to the quick and we thought that your feeling was that we had forced ourselves on you and that you had to accept the Working Committee against your better judgment. Had we understood this to be your feeling at Lucknow, things would certainly have taken a different course.

We also think that your handling of the situation in the country is doing damage to the constructive programme which we consider to be an essential and vital part of the Congress programme.

Apart from all personal considerations we have also strongly

felt that the ideals and the policy for which we have stood all these sixteen or seventeen years and which we believe to be the only right ones for the country are being most assiduously undermined and that your own views and sympathies are with those who are engaged in that game. We have felt that our association gives a false impression and that we are in a way contributing unwillingly and unconsciously to that process. It is this kind of activity which is gradually injuring the Congress organisation and the Congress prestige in the country, as the country as a whole still holds to those ideals and that policy. This results in a weakening of the Congress and encourages fissiparous tendencies among workers. This naturally lessens the chances of Congress success at the next elections. You hold a different opinion on this point. The results of elections are after all a matter of speculation and there may well be differences of opinion on that score. We have recognised the force of the argument that we should not take the drastic step we had proposed to take unless we felt sure that our resignation and its consequences will on the whole not injure the chances of success at the elections if not improve them. Some of us feel that it is possible that this action of ours may result in a course of events which may cause a further deterioration in the position as regards elections and we do not consider it proper to take any chance. At the same time the apprehension in our minds regarding a general weakening of the Congress organisation and discipline is based on our personal experience of the state of things in the Provinces and we deem it our duty to bring it to your notice so that you may deal with it in the best manner that suggests itself to you.

As we repeatedly told you all this impression has been created in our minds not by any single act or speech but as a result of the totality of activities and we feel we owe it to you to tell all this in frankness so that you may be in full cognisance of what is passing in our minds and if you feel that anything needs to be done you may do it as you deem best. We are sorry for having hurt your feelings and I only hope that this letter will help to smooth matters and not make them worse as nothing is further from our mind. I am writing this as a result of consultation and on behalf of all of us. So far as we are concerned, this is an episode for which in the best interest of the country as we conceive it we were responsible and you may treat the

letter of resignation as never having been tendered by us. Please therefore return it.

Needless to say that this letter is meant personally for you and not intended in any way to form part of the official record.

Yours sincerely,
Rajendra Prasad

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 185-88.]

# Appendix X

Allahabad,
July 5, 1936

My dear Bapu,

I arrived here last night. Ever since I left Wardha I have been feeling weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes—a chill which has aggravated my throat trouble. But partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe, I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalizing effect on me and I have almost the feeling of being older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised if this feeling was also experienced by my colleagues of the Committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralised and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone and I have been surprised at the public response. What this is due to I cannot say definitely. I can only make various guesses. This public response has naturally heartened me and filled me with fresh energy. But this energy seems to ooze out of me at every meeting of the Working Committee and I return feeling very much like a dis-

charged battery. The reaction has been greatest on this occasion because of my being physically in a low condition.

But it was not about my physical or mental condition that I wished to write to you. There are more important matters which worry me and so far I have seen no clear way out. I do not wish to act in a hurry or without giving the fullest thought to the matter. But even before my own mind is decided I want to tell you which way I am looking.

I am grateful to you for all the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis. I was convinced then and I am convinced now that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, where are we now and what does the future hold for us? I read again Rajendra Babu's letter to me (the second one) and his formidable indictment of me. That indictment, though formidable, is not specific, except for my speech at the women's meeting, which, as a matter of fact, has nothing to do with any wider issue. The main thing is that my activities are harmful to the Congress cause. They are doing damage to the Congress and are lessening its chances of success at the elections. If I continue in this way there is likely to be further deterioration and my colleagues do not wish to take any chances in this vital matter.

Now, obviously, if there is any truth in this charge it must be faced. The matter is too serious to be glossed over. There are no black and white shades, no delicate balancing of the resultant good or evil; it is all black and that really makes it easier to decide. For however tenderly the fact may be stated, it amounts to this: that I am an intolerable nuisance and the very qualities I possess —a measure of ability, energy, earnestness, some personality which has a vague appeal—become dangerous for they are harnessed to a wrong chariot. The conclusion from all this is obvious.

My own impression before Lucknow, and to some extent even at Lucknow, was that it should not be difficult for all of us to pull together this year. It is evident now that I was mistaken, though there has been no lack of trying on either side. Perhaps the fault may lie with me; I am not aware of it; but one can seldom see the beam in one's own eye. The fact remains, and today there is no loyalty of the spirit which binds our group together. It is a

mechanical group and on either side there is a dull resentment and a sense of suppression, and that, as every student of psychology knows, results in all manner of undesirable complexes, both individual and social.

When I reached Bombay this time many people stared hard at me finding it difficult to believe how I had survived. It seemed to be common knowledge there (as reported in the *Times of India* previously) that a peaceful end awaited me—politically of course. All had been fixed up except the cremation. Hence the surprise. It struck me as curious that I should be wholly ignorant of all these confident rumours when many people in the street were full of them. But though I had been ignorant of them, the rumours had the strongest justification. That in itself is a measure of my present isolation.

I have written at length, both in my book and subsequently, about my present ideas. There is no lack of material for me to be judged. Those views are not casual. They are part of me, and though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing. So far as the elections were concerned I felt definitely that my approach was a definite asset to us as it enthused the masses. But my approach, mild and vague as it was, is considered dangerous and harmful by my colleagues. I was even told that my laying stress always on the poverty and unemployment in India was unwise, or at any rate the way I did it was wrong.

You will remember that both in Delhi and in Lucknow I made it clear that I must have freedom to express my views on social matters. I understood you and the members of the Committee to agree to this. The question now becomes one more of this freedom of expression than of the views themselves. Even more so it is a question of values in life, and if we value anything greatly we may not sacrifice it.

There is this undeniable conflict. Who is right and who is wrong it is futile to argue. But after last week's incidents I am beginning to doubt if we are really following the correct course. I am inclined

to think that the right thing for us to do will be to put the matter briefly before the A.I. C. C. at its next meeting and take its direction in the matter. How best to do this I am not clear yet but it should be done as simply as possible and without much argument. So far as I am concerned there will be little argument.

Presumably the result of this will be that I shall retire and a more homogeneous Committee will be formed.

You told me that you intended issuing some kind of a statement. I shall welcome this for I believe in every viewpoint being placed clearly before the country.

I am not mentioning this matter to anyone yet. Of course, prying and impertinent eyes will see this *en route* even before it reaches you. They have to be suffered.

In Bombay I had a talk with Mridula. She came from Ahmedabad for a few hours especially at my request. She gave me to understand that, so far as facts were concerned, she had noticed (or mentioned) no difference between what you had told her and what I had written or said. She had indeed made this clear in her letter to you but perhaps you missed a sentence or two. She proposed to send you a copy of her previous letter so that you might see this for yourself.

I was told in Wardha that it was being said by Gujarat women that you or Vallabhbhai or both were responsible for the exclusion of women from the Working Committee. I enquired from Mridula. She told me that to her knowledge nobody had said so or thought so.

I also had a talk with Sarojini on this subject.

I met Jivraj Mehta and Khurshed. Jivraj did not quite agree with Bidhan about the cost, etc. But he brought down his previous figure somewhat. He now says that 2 lakhs ought to be enough for the construction, equipment, etc., of the hospital. He would like to see another 2 lakhs as a reserve fund. He is also of opinion that the construction should be made not on the Swaraj Bhawan grounds, as originally planned, but on the fields to the east of Anand Bhawan. I shall make enquiries from the Municipality about this.

I propose to convene a meeting of the Kamala Memorial trustees

in Bombay about the time the A.I. C. C. meets. Also a meeting of the Swaraj Bhawan trustees.

In Bombay Nargis insisted on sending me to a German throat specialist and this man has told me to remain almost absolutely silent for a week in order to rest my throat. It is a hard job.

Love.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 188-90.]

# Appendix XI

Segaon, Wardha,
July 8, 1936

My dear Jawaharlal,

I have just received your letter. I was seeking time to be able to write to you on the events in Wardha. Your letter makes it difficult. I would however just like to say that the letter of withdrawal does not bear the meaning you put upon it when it was given to you. It was sent to you after I had seen it. The sending of such a letter in the place of resignation was my suggestion. I wish that you could take a juster view of that letter. In any case I am firmly of opinion that during the remainder of the year, all wrangling should cease and no resignations should take place. A. I. C. C. will be paralysed and powerless to deal with the crisis. It will be torn between two emotions. It would be most unfair to spring upon it a crisis, in the name of democracy, which it has never been called upon to face. You are exaggerating the implications of the letter. I must not argue. But I would urge you to consider the situation calmly and not succumb to it in a moment of depression so unworthy of you. Why should you not allow your humour to play upon the meetings of the W. C.? Why should it be so difficult for you to get on with those with whom you have worked without a jar for years? If they are guilty of intolerance, you have more

than your share of it. The country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance.

I do hope you have accepted the very sane advice of the German doctor.

Love
Bapu

[ *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 191-92. ]

# Appendix XII

Swaraj Bhawan,
Allahabad,
July 11, 1936

My dear Jawahar,

You returned from Bombay rather ill. I did not like to disturb you. Now that you are more or less in normal health, I venture to write to you a few lines.

The action, last time at Wardha, had less personal significance than you attached to it. For me at least it had only a political significance. I never imagined that in joining my colleagues I was wanting in personal regard for you. I have always valued your friendship. Its basis was of course political. But my intimate contact with you through years has transformed it into friendship. You may not know its extent as it has never been expressed in words. It may surprise you today, but it is a fact that I postponed my marriage for a year and a half, because you were not free. When I wanted nobody else to be present on the occasion, I wanted you to be there. All this was explained to Sucheta and she in spite of her natural reluctance to wait owing to my age, appreciated and respected my sentiment. Khurshedben, our common friend, knows my attachment to you.

Bapu told me that you were most sorry for me. Your complaint was that I had not mentioned things to you earlier considering we were often together. I think I must admit the force of your

charge. It has been due to some unaccountable diffidence on my part. Ever since Lucknow, I have been thinking of having a talk with you. Somehow in the rush and pressure of our work and movements, I have been postponing this talk and have not been able to create an opportunity.

The action at Wardha, so far as I know, was sudden and unpremeditated. There was an agreement about the reaction of everyone who signed. None imagined that the action had any personal significance. You may not know but the first letter ws almost and the second entirely Rajendra Babu's draft. You wia perhaps be surprised, but all of us did think that you consideredll us a drag and would not be sorry if there was a change. We also thought that it was quite possible to rearrange the executive not necessarily with the Socialists but with some persons who did not definitely belong to the Socialist Party but were in more or less agreement with you. I can't say about all but I am positive that most of us did not think that you would be embarrassed, much less upset. After events proved that we were wrong, I write all this so that you may evaluate the action properly lest you wrong friends unintentionally.

So much for personal explanation. My political views as expressed recently have naturally surprised you. You have been absent from the arena for a considerable period. You have not a very clear idea of the background. The controversies with the Socialist friends predate the Bombay Congress. They predate even the Poona Conference. You perhaps know I was the chief, rather the only one who spoke against their proposals of withdrawal of C.D. at the Poona Conference. You may also know that some friends, notably Bhulabhai and others, did not like my opposition. Long before I was in office, my opposition to them was there. I shall try to give you briefly the genesis of that opposition and incidentally my viewpoint.

I believe it a blunder to try to lower Bapu's prestige and attack his policies. I believe we shall again need him for a fight if he is alive. I know it as a fact that he is pining for a fight. He is only biding his time. That being so, it is politically unwise to try to undermine his influence and ridicule his plans. The Congress Socialists individually and collectively have done and do this.

I believe I am a sort of Socialist myself. I share with many a natural admiration for what has been accomplished in Russia. I have read most of the significant literature. But more than being a man of thought, I am a man of action. As such I cannot wait to see the whole picture in its entirety before I commence my work. I believe no reformer did or can do that. If anybody tried he would find himself, I believe, ineffective in work. We have to be as the artists who don't express everything or try to bring in the picture every detail in the scene in order to be true and faithful. I therefore, as a worker, am rather impatient of the distant. The immediate, not in the narrow unidealistic sense, but in the sense in which a practical reformer views it, engrosses all my attention and activities. I believe nationalism specially here in India today is not a worn-out creed. I believe it can never be worn out here unless we have achieved political liberty. I therefore believe that all classes and almost all interests can be harnessed to its service and a united front evolved on that basis. I believe Independence is a sufficiently-inspiring-and-hard-to-achieve goal. I believe its ideology has not penetrated all classes of Indian society. I am therefore afraid of keeping a farther goal for the average lest I destroy their one-pointedness and consequently their capacity to work. I know logic can demolish this position for it is partial in its statement. But partial truth does become the whole truth for the time being when action is of the essence of belief.

I also believe that we are not a decadent people. We have certain values which, I am not yet prepared to say, hold good no more. I believe in the genius of my people to evolve for themselves something even as Bapu did at the psychological moment. What that thing will be, I cannot say. But for the time being I distrust all those whose ideas, ideals and methods of work are imported wholesale from outside, whatever their protestations might be. Unfortunately I believe this to be true of all my young socialist friends.

I believe today you feel more in common with these young men than with the older group however good an account it might have given of itself in the past. You feel more at home with them. They are ideologically nearer to you than Bapu. I also distrust the way in which the Socialist friends strike their alliances. Their alliances

are for the time being. They requisitioned the services of a Jamnadas[2] at Poona. They don't mind joining the communalists of Punjab and Bengal provided they have a temporary advantage on the point immediately at issue. This I consider dangerous in Indian politics. I believe Bapu had considerably saved us from this. I know even Bapu's followers do this. It is a question of degree. I may be wrong but I believe the Socialist friends excel in this game which for a characterless, nerveless and a fallen country is very dangerous.

I therefore naturally ally myself with a party more ideologically nearer to Bapu. My fight with that party from within last year is well known even to Socialist friends. But today I find they alone, however defectively, stand for the constructive programmes and generally for Bapu's ideas and his continued need in Indian politics. It will surprise you to know that at Lucknow, when I heard of Bhulabhai's contemplated inclusion in the Working Committee, I had a talk with Jairamdas and we both rushed to Bapu, told him about our views in the matter rather strongly before Vallabhbhai; Jamnalalji was also present. Bapu confronted us with the fact of the abolition of the P. Board and said somebody representing that activity must be there. Anyway we could produce no effect upon him or upon V. or Sethji. We raised no such objection when the Socialist friends were included.

I have tried in brief to keep before you the way in which my mind has been working for the last two or three years. I don't hope what I have written will appeal to you. But it will be sufficient for me to know that you don't doubt my great love and regard for you. I can truly say that there is nobody in the political field, except Bapu of course, whom I love and respect more.

I make no apology for the length of the letter for I feel it is far from exhaustive. If it leads to some talks wherein we can discuss things more in detail, I shall welcome the opportunity. I shall however be satisfied if the only result is that whatever political action I may be obliged to take in the future, you will not doubt my personal affection.

Yours ever,
Jivat

[*A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 192-95.]

# Appendix XIII

## STATEMENT BY THE CABINET DELEGATION AND HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY, NEW DELHI, 16TH MAY, 1946

1. On March 15th last just before the despatch of the Cabinet Delegation to India, Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, used these words :

"My colleagues are going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help her to attain her freedom as speedily and fully as possible. What form of Government is to replace the present regime is for India to decide; but our desire is to help her to set forthwith the machinery for making that decision."

* * * *

"I hope that India and her people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth. I am certain that they will find great advantages in doing so."

* * * *

"But if she does so elect, it must be by her own free will. The British Commonwealth and Empire is not bound together by chains of external compulsion. It is a free association of free peoples. If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so. It will be for us to help to make the transition as smooth and easy as possible."

2. Charged in these historic words we—the Cabinet Ministers and the Viceroy—have done our utmost to assist the two main

political parties to reach agreement upon the fundamental issue of the unity or division of India. After prolonged discussions in New Delhi we succeeded in bringing the Congress and the Muslim League together in conference at Simla. There was a full exchange of views and both parties were prepared to make considerable concessions in order to try and reach a settlement but it ultimately proved impossible to close the remainder of the gap between the parties and so no agreement could be concluded. Since no agreement has been reached, we feel that it is our duty to put forward what we consider are the best arrangements possible to ensure a speedy setting up of the new constitution. This statement is made with the full approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

3. We have accordingly decided that immediate arrangements should be made whereby Indians may decide the future constitution of India and an Interim Government may be set up at once to carry on the administration of British India until such time as a new Constitution can be brought into being. We have endeavoured to be just to the smaller as well as to the larger sections of the people; and to recommend a solution which will lead to a practicable way of governing the India of the future, and will give a sound basis for defence and a good opportunity for progress in the social, political and economic fields.

4. It is not intended in this statement to review the voluminous evidence that has been submitted to the Mission; but it is right that we should state that it has shown an almost universal desire, outside the supporters of the Muslim League, for the unity of India.

5. This consideration did not, however, deter us from examining closely and impartially the possibility of a partition of India since we were greatly impressed by the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu-majority rule.

This feeling has become so strong and widespread amongst the Muslims that it cannot be allayed by mere paper safeguards. If there is to be internal peace in India, it must be secured by measures which will assure to the Muslims a control in all matters vital to their culture, religion, and economic or other interests.

6. We therefore examined in the first instance the question of a

separate and fully independent sovereign State of Pakistan as claimed by the Muslim League. Such a Pakistan would comprise two areas; one in the north-west consisting of the Provinces of the Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier, and British Baluchistan; the other in the north-east consisting of the Provinces of Bengal and Assam. The League were prepared to consider adjustment of boundaries at a later stage, but insisted that the principle of Pakistan should first be acknowledged. The argument for a separate State of Pakistan was based, first, upon the right of the Muslim majority to decide their method of Government according to their wishes, and second, upon the necessity to include substantial areas in which Muslims are in a minority, in order to make Pakistan administratively and economically workable.

The size of the non-Muslim minorities in a Pakistan comprising the whole of the six Provinces enumerated above would be very considerable as the following figures* show :

| *North-Western Area* | *Muslim* | *Non-Muslim* |
|---|---|---|
| Punjab .. .. .. .. | 16,217,242 | 12,201,577 |
| North-West Frontier Province .. | 2,788,797 | 249,270 |
| Sind .. .. .. .. | 3,208,325 | 1,326,683 |
| Br. Baluchistan .. .. .. | 438,930 | 62,701 |
| | 22,653,294 | 13,840,231 |
| | 62.07% | 37.93% |

| North-Eastern Area | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bengal .. .. .. .. | 33,005,434 | 27,301,091 |
| Assam .. .. .. .. | 3,442,479 | 6,762,254 |
| | 36,447,913 | 34,063,345 |
| | 51.69% | 48.31% |

*All population figures in this statement are from the most recent census taken in 1941.

The Muslim minorities in the remainder of British India number some 20 million dispersed amongst a total population of 188 million.

These figures show that the setting up of a separate sovereign State of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem; nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally in our view be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This point would particularly affect the position of the Sikhs.

7. We therefore considered whether a smaller sovereign Pakistan confined to the Muslim majority areas alone might be a possible basis of compromise. Such a Pakistan is regarded by the Muslim League as quite impracticable because it would entail the exclusion from Pakistan of (a) the whole of the Ambala and Jullundur Divisions in the Punjab; (b) the whole of Assam except the district of Sylhet; and (c) a large part of Western Bengal, including Calcutta, in which city the Muslims form 23.6 per cent of the population. We ourselves are also convinced that any solution which involves a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces. Bengal and the Punjab each has its own common language and a long history and tradition. Moreover, any division of the Punjab would of necessity divide the Sikhs leaving substantial bodies of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary. We have therefore been forced to the conclusion that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign State of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem.

8. Apart from the great force of the foregoing arguments, there are weighty administrative, economic and military considerations. The whole of the transportation and postal and telegraph systems of India have been established on the basis of a united India. To disintegrate them would gravely injure both parts of India. The case for a united defence is even stronger. The Indian armed forces have been built up as a whole for the defence of India as a whole, and to break them into two would inflict a deadly blow on the long traditions

and high degree of efficiency of the Indian Army and would entail the gravest dangers. The Indian Navy and Indian Air Force would become much less effective. The two sections of the suggested Pakistan contain the two most vulnerable frontiers in India and for a successful defence in depth the area of Pakistan would be insufficient.

9. A further consideration of importance is the greater difficulty which the Indian States would find in associating themselves with a divided British India.

10. Finally there is the geographical fact that the two halves of the proposed Pakistan State are separated by some seven hundred miles and the communications between them both in war and peace would be dependent on the goodwill of Hindustan.

11. We are therefore unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign States.

12. This decision does not however blind us to the very real Muslim apprehensions that their culture and political and social life might become submerged in a purely unitary India, in which the Hindus with their greatly superior numbers must be a dominating element. To meet this the Congress have put forward a scheme under which the Provinces would have full autonomy subject only to a minimum of Central subjects, such as Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications.

Under this scheme, the Provinces, if they wished to take part in economic and administrative planning on a large scale, could cede to the Centre optional subjects in addition to the compulsory ones mentioned above.

13. Such a scheme would, in our view, present considerable constitutional disadvantages and anomalies. It would be very difficult to work a Central Executive and Legislature in which some Ministers, who dealt with Compulsory subjects, were responsible to the whole of India, while other Ministers, who dealt with Optional subjects, would be responsible only to those Provinces which had elected to act together in respect of such subjects. This difficulty would be accentuated in the Central Legislature, where it would be necessary to exclude certain members from speaking and voting

when subjects with which their Provinces were not concerned were under discussion.

Apart from the difficulty of working such a scheme, we do not consider that it would be fair to deny to other Provinces, which did not desire to take the optional subjects at the Centre, the right to form themselves into a group for a similar purpose. This would indeed be no more than the exercise of their autonomous powers in a particular way.

14. Before putting forward our recommendation, we turn to deal with the relationship of the Indian States to British India. It is quite clear that with the attainment of Independence by British India, whether inside or outside the British Commonwealth, the relationship which has hitherto existed between the Rulers of the States and the British Crown will no longer be possible. Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government. This fact has been fully recognised by those whom we interviewed from the States. They have at the same time assured us that the States are ready and willing to co-operate in the new development of India. The precise form which their co-operation will take must be a matter for negotiation during the building up of the new constitutional structure, and it by no means follows that it will be identical for all the States. We have not therefore dealt with the States in the same detail as the Provinces of British India in the paragraphs which follow.

15. We now indicate the nature of a solution which in our view would be just to the essential claims of all parties, and would at the same time be most likely to bring about a stable and practicable form of constitution for all India.

We recommend that the constitution should take the following basic form :

(1) There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which should deal with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Communications; and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.

(2) The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature constituted from British Indian and States' representatives. Any question raising a major communal issue in the Legis-

lature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting.

(3) All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the Provinces.

(4) The States will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union.

(5) The Provinces should be free to form Groups with executives and legislatures, and each Group could determine the Provincial subjects to be taken in common.

(6) The constitutions of the Union and of the Groups should contain a provision whereby any Province could, by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of 10 years and at 10 yearly intervals therafter.

16. It is not our object to lay out the details of a constitution on the above lines, but to set in motion the machinery whereby a constitution can be settled by Indians for Indians.

It has been necessary however for us to make this recommendation as to the broad basis of the future constitution, because it became clear to us in the course of our negotiations that not until that had been done was there any hope of getting the two major communities to join in the setting up of the constitution-making machinery.

17. We now indicate the constitution-making machinery which we propose should be brought into being forthwith in order to enable a new constitution to be worked out.

18. In forming any Assembly to decide a new Constitutional structure the first problem is to obtain as broad-based and accurate a representation of the whole population as is possible. The most satisfactory method obviously would be by election based on adult franchise; but any attempt to introduce such a step now would lead to a wholly unacceptable delay in the formulation of the new Constitution. The only practicable alternative is to utilise the recently elected Provincial Legislative Assemblies as the electing bodies. There are, however, two factors in their composition which make this difficult. First, the numerical strengths of the Provincial

Legislative Assemblies do not bear the same proportion to the total population in each Province. Thus, Assam with a population of 10 millions has a Legislative Assembly of 108 members, while Bengal, with a population six times as large, has an Assembly of only 250. Second, owing to the weightage given to minorities by the Communal Award, the strengths of the several communities in each Provincial Legislative Assembly are not in proportion to their numbers in the Province. Thus the number of seats reserved for Muslims in the Bengal Legislative Assembly is only 48 per cent of the total, although they form 55 per cent of the Provincial population. After a most careful consideration of the various methods by which these inequalities might be corrected, we have come to the conclusion that the fairest and most practicable plan would be:

(a) to allot to each Province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million, as the nearest substitute for representation by adult suffrage.

(b) to divide this provincial allocation of seats between the main communities in each Province in proportion to their population.

(c) to provide that the representatives allotted to each community in a Province shall be elected by the members of that community in its Legislative Assembly.

We think that for these purposes it is sufficient to recognise only three main communities in India: General, Muslim, and Sikh, the "General" community including all persons who are not Muslims or Sikhs. As the smaller minorities would, upon the population basis, have little or no representation since they would lose the weightage which assures them seats in the Provincial Legislatures, we have made the arrangements set out in paragraph 20 below to give them a full representation upon all matters of special interest to the minorities.

19. (i) We therefore propose that there shall be elected by each Provincial Legislative Assembly the following numbers of representatives, each part of the Legislature (General, Muslim or Sikh)

electing its own representatives by the method of proportional representation with the single transferable vote :

TABLE OF REPRESENTATION

**Section A**

| *Province* | *General* | *Muslim* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Madras .. .. .. | 45 | 4 | 49 |
| Bombay .. .. .. | 19 | 2 | 21 |
| United Provinces .. .. | 47 | 8 | 55 |
| Bihar .. .. .. | 31 | 5 | 36 |
| Central Provinces .. .. | 16 | 1 | 17 |
| Orissa .. .. .. | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| TOTAL .. .. .. | 167 | 20 | 187 |

**Section B**

| *Province* | *General* | *Muslim* | *Sikh* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| North-West Frontier Province .. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Punjab .. | 8 | 16 | 4 | 28 |
| Sind .. | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| TOTAL .. | 9 | 22 | 4 | 35 |

**Section C**

| *Province* | *General* | *Muslim* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bengal .. .. .. | 27 | 33 | 60 |
| Assam .. .. .. | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| TOTAL .. .. .. | 34 | 36 | 70 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total for British India .. | 292 |
| Maximum for Indian States | 93 |
| TOTAL .. | 385 |

*Note.*—In order to represent the Chief Commissioners' Provinces there will be added to Section A the Member representing Delhi in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Member representing Ajmer-Merwara in the Central Legislative Assembly, and a representative to be elected by the Coorg Legislative Council.

To Section B will be added a representative of British Baluchistan.

(ii) It is the intention that the States should be given in the final Constituent Assembly appropriate representation which would not, on the basis of the calculations adopted for British India, exceed 93, but the method of selection will have to be determined by consultation. The States would in the preliminary stage be represented by a Negotiating Committee.

(iii) The representatives thus chosen shall meet at New Delhi as soon as possible.

(iv) A preliminary meeting will be held at which the general order of business will be decided, a Chairman and other officers elected, and an Advisory Committee (see paragraph 20 below) on the rights of citizens, minorities, and tribal and excluded areas set up. Thereafter the provincial representatives will divide up into three sections shown under A, B, and C, in the Table of Representation in sub-paragraph (i) of this paragraph.

(v) These sections shall proceed to settle the Provincial Constitutions for the Provinces included in each section, and shall also decide whether any Group Constitution shall be set up for those Provinces and, if so, with what provincial subjects the Group should deal. Provinces shall have the power to opt out of the Groups in accordance with the provisions of sub-clause (viii) below.

(vi) The representatives of the Sections and the Indian States shall reassemble for the purpose of settling the Union Constitution.

(vii) In the Union Constituent Assembly resolutions varying the provisions of paragraph 15 above or raising any major communal issue shall require a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities.

The Chairman of the Assembly shall decide which (if any) of the resolutions raise major communal issues and shall, if so requested by a majority of the representatives of either of the major communities, consult the Federal Court before giving his decision.

(viii) As soon as the new constitutional arrangements have come into operation, it shall be open to any Province to elect to come out of any Group in which it has been placed. Such a decision shall be taken by the new legislature of the Province after the first general election under the new constitution.

20. The Advisory Committee on the rights of citizens, minorities, and tribal and excluded areas should contain full representation of the interests affected, and their function will be to report to the Union Constituent Assembly upon the list of Fundamental Rights, the clauses for the protection of minorities, and a scheme for the administration of the tribal and excluded areas, and to advise whether these rights should be incorporated in the Provincial, Group or Union constitution.

21. His Excellency the Viceroy will forthwith request the Provincial Legislatures to proceed with the election of their representatives and the States to set up a Negotiating Committee. It is hoped that the process of constitution-making can proceed as rapidly as the complexities of the task permit so that the interim period may be as short as possible.

22. It will be necessary to negotiate a Treaty between the Union Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom to provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power.

23. While the constitution-making proceeds, the administration of India has to be carried on. We attach the greatest importance therefore to the setting up at once of an interim Government having the support of the major political parties. It is essential during the interim period that there should be the maximum of co-operation in carrying through the difficult tasks that face the Government of India. Besides the heavy task of day-to-day administration, there is the grave danger of famine to be countered; there are decisions to be taken in many matters of post-war development which will have a far-reaching effect on India's future; and there are important international conferences in which India has to be represented. For all these purposes a Government having popular support is necessary. The Viceroy has already started discussions to this end, and hopes soon to form an Interim Government in which all the portfolios, including that of War Member, will be held by Indian leaders having the full confidence of the people. The

British Government, recognising the significance of the changes in the Government of India, will give the fullest measure of co-operation to the Government so formed in the accomplishment of its tasks of administration and in bringing about as rapid and smooth a transition as possible.

24. To the leaders and people of India who now have the opportunity of complete independence we would finally say that we and our Government and countrymen hope that it would be possible for the Indian people themselves to agree upon the method of framing the new constitution under which they will live. Despite the labours which we have shared with the Indian Parties, and the exercise of much patience and goodwill by all, this has not been possible. We therefore now lay before you proposals which, after listening to all sides and after much earnest thought, we trust will enable you to attain independence in the shortest time and with the least danger of internal disturbance and conflict. These proposals may not, of course, completely satisfy all parties, but you will recognise with us that at this supreme moment in Indian history statesmanship demands mutual accommodation.

We ask you to consider the alternative to acceptance of these proposals. After all the efforts which we and the Indian Parties have made together for agreement, we must state that in our view there is small hope of peaceful settlement by agreement of the Indian Parties alone. The alternative would therefore be a grave danger of violence, chaos, and even civil war. The result and duration of such a disturbance cannot be foreseen; but it is certain that it would be a terrible disaster for many millions of men, women and children. This is a possibility which must be regarded with equal abhorrence by the Indian people, our own countrymen, and the world as a whole.

We therefore lay these proposals before you in the profound hope that they will be accepted and operated by you in the spirit of accommodation and goodwill in which they are offered. We appeal to all who have the future good of India at heart to extend their vision beyond their own community or interest to the interests of the whole four hundred millions of the Indian people.

We hope that the new independent India may choose to be a member of the British Commonwealth. We hope in any event that

you will remain in close and friendly association with our people. But these are matters for your own free choice. Whatever that choice may be we look forward with you to your ever-increasing prosperity among the great nations of the world, and to a future even more glorious than your past.

[*The History of the Indian National Congress*, pp. clxiii-clxx.]

# Appendix XIV

## STATEMENT BY CABINET DELEGATION AND HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY, 16TH JUNE, 1946

1. His Excellency the Viceroy, in consultation with the members of the Cabinet Mission, has for some time been exploring the possibilities of forming a coalition Government drawn from the two major parties and certain of the minorities. The discussions have revealed the difficulties which exist for the two major parties in arriving at any agreed basis for the formation of such a Government.

2. The Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission appreciate these difficulties and the efforts which the two parties have made to meet them. They consider, however, that no useful purpose can be served by further prolonging these discussions. It is indeed urgently necessary that a strong and representative Interim Government should be set up to conduct the very heavy and important business that has to be carried through.

3. The Viceroy is therefore issuing invitations to the following to serve as members of the Interim Government on the basis that the constitution-making will proceed in accordance with the Statement of May 16th :

| | |
|---|---|
| Sardar Baldev Singh | Dr. Rajendra Prasad |
| Sir N. P. Engineer | Mr. H. K. Mahtab |
| Mr. Jagjivan Ram | Dr. John Matthai |
| Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru | Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan |
| Mr. M. A. Jinnah | Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin |

Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar
Mr. C. Rajagopalachari Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

If any of those invited is unable for personal reasons to accept, the Viceroy will, after consultation, invite some other person in his place.

4. The Viceroy will arrange the distribution of portfolios in consultation with the leaders of the two major parties.

5. The above composition of the Interim Government is in no way to be taken as a precedent for the solution of any other communal question. It is an expedient put forward to solve the present difficulty only, and to obtain the best available coalition Government.

6. The Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission believe that Indians of all communities desire to arrive at a speedy settlement of this matter so that the process of constitution-making can go forward and that the Government of India may be carried on as efficiently as possible in the meantime.

7. They therefore hope that all parties, especially the two major parties, will accept this proposal so as to overcome the present obstacles, and will co-operate for the successful carrying on of the Interim Government. Should this proposal be accepted, the Viceroy will aim at inaugurating the new Government about the 26th June.

8. In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join the setting up of a coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the Statement of May 16th.

9. The Viceroy is also directing the Governors of the Provinces to summon the Provincial Legislative Assemblies forthwith to proceed with the elections necessary for the setting up of the constitution-making machinery as put forward in the Statement of May 16th.

The Viceroy sent an advance copy of this statement to the Congress President with the following covering letter :

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.
16th June, 1946.

No. 592/47.
Dear Maulana Sahib,

I send herewith a copy of the statement which, as indicated in the letter I sent you yesterday, will be released at 4 p.m. this evening.

As the Statement shows, the Cabinet Ministers and I are fully aware of the difficulties that have prevented an agreement on the composition of the Interim Government. We are unwilling to abandon our hope of a working partnership between the two major parties and representatives of the minorities. We have therefore done our best to arrive at a practicable agreement taking into consideration the various conflicting claims and the need for obtaining a Government of capable and representative administrators. We hope that the parties will now take their share in the administration of the country on the basis set out in your new Statement. We are sure we can rely on you and your Working Committee to look to the wider issues and to the urgent needs of the country as a whole, and to consider this proposal in a spirit of accommodation.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

[*The History of the Indian National Congress*, pp. ccxiii-ccxv.]

# Appendix XV

The following is the full text of the Announcement or Statement of H. M. Government commonly known as the 3rd June Plan, on which the Partition of India and the transfer of Power to the Dominions of India and Pakistan were based.

## STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

### Introduction

1. On February 20th, 1947, His Majesty's Government announced their intention of transferring power in British India to Indian hands by June 1948. His Majesty's Government had hoped that it would be possible for the major parties to co-operate in the working out of the Cabinet Mission's Plan of May 16th, 1946, and evolve for India a Constitution acceptable to all concerned. This hope has not been fulfilled.

2. The majority of the representatives of the Provinces of Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Berar, Assam, Orissa and the North-West Frontier Province, and the representatives of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara and Coorg have already made progress in the task of evolving a new Constitution. On the other hand, the Muslim League Party, including in it a majority of the representatives of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind as also the representative of British Baluchistan, has decided not to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

3. It has always been the desire of His Majesty's Government

that power should be transferred in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people themselves. This task would have been greatly facilitated if there had been agreement among the Indian political parties. In the absence of such agreement, the task of devising a method by which the wishes of the Indian people can be ascertained has devolved upon His Majesty's Government. After full consultation with political leaders in India, His Majesty's Government have decided to adopt for this purpose the plan set out below. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that they have no intention of attempting to frame any ultimate Constitution for India; this is a matter for the Indians themselves. Nor is there anything in this plan to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India.

### The Issues to be Decided

4. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to interrupt the work of the existing Constituent Assembly. Now that provision is made for certain Provinces specified below, His Majesty's Government trust that, as a consequence of this announcement, the Muslim League representatives of those Provinces, a majority of whose representatives are already participating in it, will now take their due share in its labours. At the same time it is clear that any Constitution framed by this Assembly cannot apply to those parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it. His Majesty's Government are satisfied that the procedure outlined below embodies the best practical method of ascertaining the wishes of the people of such areas on the issue whether their Constitution is to be framed :

(a) in the existing Constituent Assembly; or

(b) in a new and separate Constituent Assembly consisting of representatives of those areas which decide not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly.

When this has been done, it will be possible to determine the authority or authorities to whom power should be transferred.

### Bengal and the Punjab

5. The Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab (excluding the European members) will, therefore, each be

asked to meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the Province. For the purpose of determining the population of districts, the 1941 census figures will be taken as authoritative. The Muslim majority districts in these two Provinces are set out in the Appendix to this Announcement.

6. The members of the two parts of each Legislative Assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether or not the Province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decides in favour of partition, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly.

7. Before the question as to the partition is decided, it is desirable that the representatives of each part should know in advance which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join in the event of the two parts subsequently deciding to remain united. Therefore, if any member of either Legislative Assembly so demands, there shall be held a meeting of all members of the Legislative Assembly (other than Europeans) at which a decision will be taken on the issue as to which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join if it were decided by the two parts to remain united.

8. In the event of partition being decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly will, on behalf of the areas they represent, decide which of the alternatives in paragraph 4 above to adopt.

9. For the immediate purpose of deciding on the issue of partition, the members of the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab will sit in two parts according to Muslim majority districts (as laid down in the Appendix) and non-Muslim majority districts. This is only a preliminary step of a purely temporary nature as it is evident that for the purposes of a final partition of these Provinces a detailed investigation of boundary questions will be needed; and, as soon as a decision involving partition has been taken for either Province, a Boundary Commission will be set up by the Governor-General, the membership and terms of reference of which will be settled in consultation with those concerned. It will be instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. It will also be instructed to take into account other factors. Similar instructions will be given to the Bengal Boundary Commission. Until the report of a Boundary Commission has

been put into effect, the provisional boundaries indicated in the Appendix will be used.

### SIND

10. The Legislative Assembly of Sind (excluding the European members) will at a special meeting also take its own decision on the alternatives in paragraph 4 above.

### NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

11. The position of the North-West Frontier Province is exceptional. Two of the three representatives of this Province are already participating in the existing Constituent Assembly. But it is clear, in view of its geographical situation, and other considerations, that if the whole or any part of the Punjab decides not to join the existing Constituent Assembly, it will be necessary to give the North-West Frontier Province an opportunity to reconsider its position. Accordingly, in such an event, a referendum will be made to the electors of the present Legislative Assembly in the North-West Frontier Province to choose which of the alternatives mentioned in paragraph 4 above they wish to adopt. The referendum will be held under the aegis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Provincial Government.

### BRITISH BALUCHISTAN

12. British Baluchistan has elected a member, but he has not taken his seat in the existing Constituent Assembly. In view of its geographical situation, this Province will also be given an opportunity to reconsider its position and to choose which of the alternatives in paragraph 4 above to adopt. His Excellency the Governor-General is examining how this can most appropriately be done.

### ASSAM

13. Though Assam is predominantly a non-Muslim Province, the district of Sylhet which is contiguous to Bengal is predominantly Muslim. There has been a demand that, in the event of the partition of Bengal, Sylhet should be amalgamated with the Muslim part of Bengal. Accordingly, if it is decided that Bengal should be partitioned, a referendum will be held in Sylhet district under the aegis

of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Assam Provincial Government to decide whether the district of Sylhet should continue to form part of the Assam Province or should be amalgamated with the new Province of Eastern Bengal, if that Province agrees. If the referendum results in favour of amalgamation with Eastern Bengal, a Boundary Commission with terms of reference similar to those for the Punjab and Bengal will be set up to demarcate the Muslim majority areas of Sylhet district and contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts, which will then be transferred to Eastern Bengal. The rest of the Assam Province will in any case continue to participate in the proceedings of the existing Constituent Assembly.

### REPRESENTATION IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLIES

14. If it is decided that Bengal and the Punjab should be partitioned, it will be necessary to hold fresh elections to choose their representatives on the scale of one for every million of population according to the principle contained in the Cabinet Mission's Plan of May 16th, 1946. Similar elections will also have to be held for Sylhet in the event of it being decided that this district should form part of East Bengal. The number of representatives to which each area would be entitled is as follows :

| *Province* | *General* | *Muslims* | *Sikhs* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sylhet District .. | 1 | 2 | Nil | 3 |
| West Bengal .. | 15 | 4 | Nil | 19 |
| East Bengal .. | 12 | 29 | Nil | 41 |
| West Punjab .. | 3 | 12 | 2 | 17 |
| East Punjab .. | 6 | 4 | 2 | 12 |

15. In accordance with the mandates given to them, the representatives of the various areas will either join the existing Constituent Assembly or form the new Constituent Assembly.

### ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

16. Negotiations will have to be initiated as soon as possible on the administrative consequences of any partition that may have been decided upon :

(a) Between the representatives of the respective successor authorities about all subjects now dealt with by the Central Government, including Defence, Finance and Communications.

(b) Between different successor authorities and His Majesty's Government for treaties in regard to matters arising out of the transfer of power.

(c) In the case of Provinces that may be partitioned, as to the administration of all provincial subjects such as the division of assets and liabilities, the police and other services, the High Courts, provincial institutions, etc.

### The Tribes of the North-West Frontier

17. Agreements with tribes of the North-West Frontier of India will have to be negotiated by the appropriate successor authority.

### The States

18. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12th May 1946 remains unchanged.

### Necessity for Speed

19. In order that the successor authorities may have time to prepare themselves to take over power, it is important that all the above processes should be completed as quickly as possible. To avoid delay, the different Provinces or parts of Provinces will proceed independently as far as practicable within the conditions of this Plan. The existing Constituent Assembly and the new Constituent Assembly (if formed) will proceed to frame Constitutions for their respective territories ; they will of course be free to frame their own rules.

### Immediate Transfer of Power

20. The major political parties have repeatedly emphasized their desire that there should be the earliest possible transfer of power in India. With this desire His Majesty's Government are in full sympathy, and they are willing to anticipate the date of June, 1948,

for the handing over of power by the setting up of an independent Indian Government or Governments at an even earlier date. Accordingly, as the most expeditious, and indeed the only practicable way of meeting this desire, His Majesty's Government propose to introduce legislation during the current session for the transfer of power this year on a Dominion Status basis to one or two successor authorities according to the decisions taken as a result of this announcement. This will be without prejudice to the right of the Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth.

### FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS BY GOVERNOR-GENERAL

21. His Excellency the Governor-General will from time to time make such further announcements as may be necessary in regard to procedure or any other matters for carrying out the above arrangements.

### APPENDIX

The Muslim majority districts of Punjab and Bengal according to 1941 census.

1. THE PUNJAB :

Lahore Division—Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot.
Rawalpindi Division—Attock, Gujrat, Jhelum, Mianwali, Rawalpindi, Shahpur.
Multan Division—Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Multan, Muzaffargarh.

2. BENGAL :

Chittagong Division—Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera.
Dacca Division —Bakerganj, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh.
Presidency Division—Jessore, Murshidabad, Nadia.
Rajshahi Division.—Bogra, Dinajpur, Malda, Pabna, Rajshahi, Rangpur.

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,
NEW DELHI.

3rd June 1947.

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